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DRAMATIC WORKS

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

AUTHOR OF

"OUR VILLAGE," "ATHERTON,"

&c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1854.

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SADAK AND KALASRADE:

A ROMANTIC OPERA.

In Two Acts.

PREFACE.

THEY who are acquainted with the fine old tale of "Sadak and Kalasrade"—and who is there so dull or so wise as not to be familiar with that gorgeous Eastern fiction?—will easily detect the points in which I have deviated from the original story. The alterations will be found to consist chiefly in the omission of the children; in an entire change of the machinery—since for the Invisible Spirits, Good and Evil, and the whole scene of the Enchanted Island, I am solely responsible; and in that general shortening and gathering together of events, which I found essential to my purpose, of bringing them within the compass of a Two Act Drama.

To tell the story briefly and clearly, has been my principal object in this Opera; and I have to entreat the reader to remember that the piece was designed

merely as a vehicle for music; that the whole of the dialogue was originally intended for recitative; that the songs and choruses all contribute to the development of the plot and the progress of the action; and that it is not with English Tragedies, whether written by myself or by my betters, but with German and Italian Operas, that "Sadak and Kalasrade" can fairly be brought into comparison as a literary composition. The poetry, if poetry there be, must be sought for in the construction of the Drama; and I have aspired only to the praise of having afforded to the composer, the scene-painter, and the machinist, the opportunity of interweaving the mingled charms of melody and of picture with the magic of a fairy tale, bound up with the dearest associations of our childhood, and too beautiful in itself ever to fade away.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Amurath, Caliph of Persia	Mr. Wilson.
Sadak, Commander of the Persian Army ...	Mr. H. Phillips.
Achmet, Grand Vizier	Mr. J. Bland.
Azim, Captain of the Caliph's Guard ...	Mr. Edwards.
Selim, Slave of Sadak	Mr. Dubochet.
Hassan, *Hafiz* ... } *Officers of the Guard*	Mr. Brayne. / Mr. Brunton.
Kalasrade, Bride of Sadak	Miss E. Romer.
Zulema, Sister of Kalasrade	Miss Somerville.
Nymph of the Fountain	Mrs. Gordon.

PERFORMED AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE.

SADAK AND KALASRADE;

OR,

THE WATERS OF OBLIVION.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An open Grove of Palms.

Soldiers stealing separately from different parts of the Stage.

CHORUS OF SOLDIERS.

Hist! comrades, hist! the sun is low,
Amid the palms cool breezes blow,
The grove of waving palms, where we
Were bid to muster secretly,
One by one, and two by two,
The Caliph's high behest to do.
The sun gleams through the dew-drops clear,
Hist! hist! an armed tread is near.

SOLDIER. 'Tis Azim, our bold captain.

Enter AZIM.

AZIM. Comrades brave,
I greet ye well; albeit I come not now
To lead ye on to glorious victory
Through glorious toils, but to a slight task, fit
For the harem's slaves. Thus Amurath commands:
That stealthily, yet swiftly, we surround
The peaceful palace, whose light towers ye see
Above the almond grove. And then—Good comrades,
Did ye ne'er pluck a blossom from the tree,
Or snatch a brooding dove from off her nest?
Such work is ours. Would it were done. Haste! haste!
But with a cautious speed.

CHORUS OF SOLDIERS.

On, comrades, on! In yonder nest,
The milk-white dove hath sought her rest;
Fragrant and fair, in yonder bower,
Blooms peacefully the milk-white flower.
One by one, and two by two,
We speed the Caliph's will to do,
With stealthy step that none may hear;
On! on! the fated towers are near. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Gardens of Kalasrade, with a splendid Palace in the Background. Young Maidens forming garlands of roses. —They advance to the front of the Stage, still busy with their flowers, and sing—

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

Oh, weave the rose, the dewy, dewy rose,
The peerless queen of flowers,

Till the column'd hall as brightly glows,
With wreath upon wreath of the dewy rose,
As in May the garden bowers.

Enter KALASRADE.

KAL. On, gentle maids! ye are deft weavers. On!
On with your pleasant toil. My Sadak comes
Victorious back, and we must welcome him
As best we may, not with vain pageantry,
For such he loves not, but with song and flower.
The peaceful joys of home.

Enter ZULEMA.

My Zulema,
Hast heard the tidings? Sadak comes.
ZUL. Unhurt?
Thou need'st not answer, Kalasrade; thy smile
Sufficeth. And a conqueror?
KAL. Ay, be sure
Of that.
ZUL. Comes he to-night?
KAL. I fear me, no;
He hath prisoners to deliver. The great traitor,
Othman, who led the rebel host, hath fallen
Alive into his power. But he is safe,
My dear, dear husband! that is joy enough;
And each hour brings him nearer. When he left me
But two moons wedded, for these wars, I wept
As though I were the wretchedest wife alive,
And now I am most blessed. Oh, 'tis sweet,
This sunshine after rain.

Duet—KALASRADE *and* ZULEMA.

A fearful and a dreary day
It is to woman's heart,
When to the bloody battle fray,
She sees her love depart.

But when triumphant he returns
To his dear home again,
The joy that in her bosom burns,
May well repay the pain.

[*At the end of the Duet, which is interwoven with the preceding Chorus, resumed by the Flower Maidens,* AZIM *and his Soldiers enter and fire the Castle.*

KAL. What sounds are those? My Sadak? No! Help! Help!

AZIM. Yield, for ye must! Your slaves are overpowered,
Your castle is in flames! Bear them away
To the Palace in the Mountains!

[*Exeunt Soldiers, carrying off* KALASRADE *and* ZULEMA.

SCENE III.

An Apartment in the Caliph's Palace.

Enter AMURATH *and Slaves.*

AMU. Hath aught been heard of Azim? Nay, ye know not.
Call the Vizier. [*Exeunt Slaves.*

Romance—AMURATH.

She lay beneath the forest shade,
As midst its leaves a lily fair,
Sleeping she lay, young Kalasrade,
Nor dreamt that mortal hover'd there.

All as she slept, a sudden smile
Played round her lips in dimpling grace;
And softest blushes glanced the while
In roseate beauty o'er her face.
And then those blushes passed away
From her pure cheek, and Kalasrade,
Pale as a new-blown lily, lay
Slumb'ring beneath the forest glade.

Oh! lovely was that blush so meek,
That smile half-playful, half-demure;
And lovelier still that pallid cheek,
That look so gentle, yet so pure.
I left her in her purity,
Slumb'ring beneath the forest shade;
I feared to meet her waking eye,
The young, the timid Kalasrade.
I left her; yet, by day, by night,
Dwells in my soul that image fair,
Madd'ning as thoughts of past delight,
As guilty hope, as fierce despair.

Enter ACHMET.

AMU. Ha! Achmet! Speak, Vizier. Is she arrived?
Thou know'st whom I would say—the only she,
Fair Kalasrade.

ACH. Dread sir, the beauty comes;
Already, Azim, with his warlike train
And the close-guarded litter, may be seen
Threading the mountain path.

AMU. And Sadak?

ACH. He,
This very day, leads the stout traitor, Othman,
A prisoner to Bagdad.

AMU. Would she were not
His wife! Just mastering a strong rebellion,
And then returning in his pride of conquest
To such a desolation. I must quell
These thoughts. I cannot quell my love.
ACH. And he
Is dangerous, sire. A bold, ambitious soldier,
Who courts the popular praise. More dangerous
Than Othman was, and in his inmost heart
A deeper traitor.
AMU. Thou hast ever been
His enemy.
ACH. Because I deemed him thine.
AMU. Falsely! He was all loyalty.
ACH. The keener
His indignation now. We must secure him
Ere he can move the fickle soldiery
To aid his swift revenge.
AMU. Even as thou wilt—
I have no thought save of fair Kalasrade.
Didst thou not say she comes?

Duet—AMURATH *and* ACHMET.

AMURATH.

She comes, she comes, the vision bright
That I have longed yet feared to see,
And those twin stars of dewy light,
Her waking eyes, will dwell on me;
Then like a young gazelle, at sight
Of the bold hunter, turn and flee.

She comes, she comes, whose form, whose face,
Give token what the mind must be;

And I shall see her moving grace,
Shall hear her speak, and speak to me;
Thrice happy, though in sportive chase,
The young gazelle should turn and flee.

ACHMET.

I triumph o'er the haughty foe
That laugh'd to scorn the statesman's care,
But we must deal a craftier blow,
Must lure him by a wilier snare.
Fearful the wounded panther's wrath,
When crossed upon his homeward path.

Yes, yes, I triumph! He must fall;—
But 'twill a deed of danger be,
That mighty chieftain to enthrall,
And lead him on to destiny.
I'd cross the raging panther's path,
Sooner than Sadak in his wrath. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

A Square in Bagdad with a Triumphal Arch, and a Crowd of People assembled, waiting the arrival of Sadak.

CHORUS OF PEOPLE.

Hail to great Sadak! First in war,
Mightiest 'mid mighty chieftains, thou!
With captives crouching at thy car,
And victory on thy noble brow!
Hail to great Sadak! Hail!

[*During the Chorus, enter a Grand Procession of Soldiers, Flower Girls, &c. preceding a Car, drawn by Captives, in which* SADAK *is seated. They arrange themselves round the Stage to a March.*

SAD. Thanks, gentle countrymen! and more than thanks

To ye, my tried companions of the war—
Stout partners of full many a victory!
Soon as the treasure camels come, the wealth
Of these proud traitors shall be yours—a mine
Of glittering gold. But your chief gain hath been
Honour, brave soldiers—that for which great kings
Peril their kingdoms. Each man fought, as though
The fate of battle on his single arm
Depended; at each stroke a foeman fell—
He had not time to fly—for your swift sword
Foreran the cowardly purpose. Ye have left
No enemy to conquer. Home, and sheathe
Your scimetars in glory. For to-night
Disport ye in the city, the good people
Love a bold warrior; at to-morrow's dawn
The spoil shall be divided. Then each man
Haste to his happy home; the best reward
Of loyalty and valour.

Air—SADAK.

Our dangers are done,
Our battles are won,
And joyfully each happy soldier returns,
To read his best praise,
In the loved one's fond gaze,
In the cheek that glows, and the heart that burns.

Enter SELIM, *followed by other Slaves.*

SAD. Selim, what brings thee hither? What great grief?
Good tidings never wore a face so sad.
What evil? Speak.
SEL. Alas, my lord, I fear—
SAD. Speak on: I can endure.

SEL. Last night, thy palace
Was burnt even to the ground.
SAD. And Kalasrade?
I am a soldier—I can bear—bear much.
Thou see'st I do not falter. Kalasrade!
She died?
SEL. Nay, nay, not so.
SAD. She safe! Why then
I have lost nothing. Lead me to her.
SEL. Sir,
The band that fired the house, bore her away
I know not whither.
SAD. And thou liv'st to tell
This tale! and I to hear! Borne off by ruffians!
Oh, would that she had died! Yet there may still
Be hope of rescue or of vengeance. Comrades,
Say, will you aid me?
SOLDIERS. To the death.
SAD. Ye'll follow
Wherever I shall lead?
SOLDIERS. On our good swords
We swear.
SAD. No need of oaths! Do I not know ye?
Ye'll follow?
SOLDIERS. To the death.
SAD. Thanks! thanks! Which road
Took they?
SEL. Toward the mountains. Noble sir,
These men were habited as I have seen
The Caliph's guard.
SAD. The Caliph's guard! And took
The path toward the mountains—No! no! no!
I'll not suspect him yet—No! no! no! no!
But I'll pursue this band. I'll rescue thee,

Or die for thee, sweet wife. Brave friends, come on.
SOLDIERS. Ay, to the death. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

An Apartment in the Caliph's Palace.

Enter KALASRADE *and* ZULEMA.

ZUL. Nay, calm thee, dearest Kalasrade; take patience;
Quell these wild terrors.
KAL. Patience! ay, the word
Is easily spoken. Zulema, did Patience
Ever keep house with Fear or with Despair?

Song—KALASRADE.

Preach patience to the startled dove,
When angry storms uproot the tree,
Where she had built her home of love,
And thought with her fond mate to be
Happy, poor bird, and true and free;
Soothe her:—then talk of peace to me!

Bid her be calm, the mountain roe,
When struggling in the hunter's snare,
She feels the bonds that laid her low,
Looks round with wild and sudden stare,
Starts, shivers, plunges, gasps for air;
Still her:—then quiet my despair.

ZUL. Would I could soothe thee, dear one. Azim here!

Enter AZIM.

AZIM. Alas, dear lady, I am sent to thee
On an ungrateful errand. Amurath
Requires thy presence.

KAL. Wherefore?
AZIM. He would see
The beauteous wife of Sadak.
KAL. Dares he name
The friend whom he hath wronged? The loyal heart,
His perfidy hath broken? Tell the Caliph
The wife of Sadak bows to no man's mandate
Save her dear husband's.
AZIM. Yet beseech thee, lady,
Listen.
ZUL. Ay, listen, sister! Azim means us
Fairly and kindly.
AZIM. By this fairest hand,
I do. Who could deceive such innocence,
Such trusting innocence! Ye knew me first
A foe, a cowardly foe, the wretched slave
Of a thrice wretched duty. But my heart
Was traitor to mine office, even before
I saw those maiden charms. And now,—oh, would
My life might be your ransom!
KAL. Save us, Azim,
Release us, set us free! I know my home,
My pleasant home, lies a black smouldering heap
Of smoking ruins. Send me forth a wanderer,
A houseless wanderer, through the weary world,
And my life long shall be one ceaseless prayer
For my deliverer.
AZIM. Ah, gentle captives,
Guard upon guard, spy upon spy, strong towers,
Walls inaccessible and gates of brass,
Bar ye from freedom, But for Sadak's sake—
KAL. He lives then! say he lives!
AZIM. Surely he lives.

KAL. Thanks, gracious powers, he lives! Oh, blessings rest
On him that spake that blessed word! He lives!
And he will rescue us!

AZIM. But thou must soothe
Great Amurath. He sent me to implore
Your instant presence; to demand if aught
Within a monarch's power could pleasure yield
To the fair Kalasrade?

ZUL. Bethink thee, Azim,
How we may dally with him:—Yestermorn
I could have piled fantastic wish on wish,
Would have ta'en a month to tell them.

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS—*(All along Invisible.)*

Hark, Lady! Hark!

KAL. Who speaks?

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

Hark, Lady! Hark!

ZUL. Whence comes this ravishing music?

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

Hark, Lady! Hark!
We are above, beneath, around,
Over the clouds we dwell, under the ground,
Spirits of air we be, Spirits of sound,
Hark, Lady! Hark!

KAL. Ay, I will hearken. From such voices nought
Save good can issue. Spirits, I attend.

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

Mark, Lady! Mark!
Bid them to seek the mystic fountain,
That wells underneath the burning mountain;
The fiery hill, in whose caverns low,
The Waves of Oblivion tranquilly flow;
Bid them to bring of those Waters clear,
Untasted till Amurath quaff them here;
So shalt thou 'scape the danger near.
Mark, Lady! Mark!

ZUL. All's still again. Thou wilt obey?
KAL. How said they?
The Waters of Oblivion? I have heard
Of such a quest.
AZIM. Full oft they have been sought
And in the search have many fallen; few
'Tis deemed e'er reached the enchanted isle, where flows
The mystic fountain; none hath e'er returned
To tell the bold adventure.
KAL. I'll demand
The waters. Those sweet airs dwell on mine ear
All soothingly as pity. I have faith
In such wild melodies. Nature herself
Is full of choicest music.

Trio—AZIM, KALASRADE, *and* ZULEMA.

There is a pure and holy spell
In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell;
The pleasant hum of the early bee,
As she plies her cheerful industry;
The whirr of the golden beetle's wing,
Sailing heavily by at evening;

And the nightingale, so poets say,
Wooing the rose in his matchless lay.

There is a pure and holy spell,
In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell:
The Indian shell, whose faithful strain,
Echoes the song of the distant main!
The streamlet gurgling through the trees,
The welcome sigh of the cool night-breeze;
The cataract loud, the whirlwind high,
Hath each its thrilling melody.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

A Splendid Hall in AMURATH'S *Palace, Throne, &c.*

AMURATH, ACHMET, *Slaves and Guards, enter to a Grand March.*

AMU. Go tell the Lady Kalasrade, Abdallah,
That we await her presence.

Enter AZIM, KALASRADE, *and* ZULEMA.

Lovely lady,
Welcome a thousand-fold! Thy beauty lights
Our mountain fortress with a gladdening beam,
Even as that sun-like gem, the carbuncle,
Illumes its native mine. Wilt thou not speak
One word? only one word?

KAL. Alas, I must.
I am a slave, a captive, I have lost
The power of silence.

AMU. Fairest, it is I
That am thy captive. Name but thy desire,

And it shall wait thy bidding.

KAL. Liberty!

The prisoner hath one only wish.

AMU. No! No!

I cannot part with thee! gold, jewels, cities,
Kingdoms, my very Empire, all are thine,
Except the boon that parts us.

KAL. Next to freedom

I'd crave forgetfulness. Didst ever hear
Of the Waters of Oblivion?

AMU. Many times— [*Noise without.*

What noise is that? Bid them be still without;
This is no place for brawling sentinel,
Or clashing sword.—Full often, lovely lady,
Have I heard stories of brave men who sought
Those wondrous Waters. An old prophecy
Saith, that in happy hour for love and Persia,
Shall Persia's monarch quaff the untasted cup.

KAL. Such, sire, is my demand. Expect no favour
Of Kalasrade till thou procure that draught
Of mystic power.

AMU. Thy will shall be obeyed. [*Noise again.*

Again that noise? Sadak!

Enter SADAK.

ACH. Disarm him!

SAD. Men,

Take heed!

ACH. Disarm him, slaves.

SAD. Slaves that ye be,

Take heed! I am a soldier; I have won
Alone through guarded gates, through crowded courts,
Leapt from the trembling drawbridge as it rose,
Just cleared the grim portcullis ere it fell,

Have dared a thousand deaths to rescue her,
My Kalasrade, my wife ! and do ye think,
With her dear self before me, I shall yield
To an army such as ye? My faithful bands
Are near at hand. Oh, could I but have reined
My hot impatience to their pace, we had ta'en
Thy mountain fortress.

AMU. (*To an Officer of the Guard.*) Meet them in the pass,
They cannot fight ye there. Hold parley with them.

[*Exit Officer.*

Audacious rebel, now for thee!

SAD. For thee,
Fell tyrant.

KAL. Sadak, calm thee! For my sake
Be calmer, mine own Sadak! reason with them,
Plead with them, Sadak! I am in their power.

SAD. Plead! and to him, the ingrate!

KAL. For my sake.

SAD. For thy dear sake—Well—Well!
My Kalasrade.
All thy life long thy lightest wish hath been
A law to me.

Song—SADAK.

I've stemm'd the torrent's sternest power,
To pluck for thee a wilding flower;
I've climbed the tall rock's beetling crest,
To win for thee a falcon's nest;
I've tilted in the tournay fray,
And triumphed in the battle day,
For thy dear sake!

And shall I not attempt for thee,
A higher, holier victory!

Curb Passion strong, by stronger Will,
Bid Wrath be mute, and Valour still,
Smooth Anger's frown, and Scorn's proud smile,
And cry to Vengeance, Wait awhile!
For thy dear sake!

AMU. What dalliance is here?
SAD. Caliph, I come
For justice. I thy subject and thy friend,
(Kings have not many friends) I come to thee
To do me a great justice. See I fling
My sword away. I come to thee a suppliant.
Being in the wars, thy wars, leading thy armies,
Quelling a strong rebellion, conquering
A bold and subtle traitor, thy fierce ruffians
Entered my quiet dwelling, fired my house,
(But that were nothing!) carried off my wife,
The fair, the dear, the faithful! Look on her!
See how she weeps! Restore her to me, Caliph,
Or she will die before thine eyes! Restore her,
And save two lives!
KAL. Oh, listen, mighty Caliph!
Low at thy knees I bend; I kiss thy feet;
Restore me to my Sadak! My dear husband!
Mine own dear husband!
AMU. Kalasrade! I cannot
Endure to part from her!
ACH. What hinders, sire,
But we should slay the rebel?
AMU. No. Thou art here,
Captive unarmed, defenceless; but I fain
Would spare thee—yield thy wife.
SAD. Never!
AMU. Then seek

The Waters of Oblivion—I would give thee
Another chance for life—and bring the cup
Untasted hither.

SAD. Wherefore?

AMU. Kalasrade
Demands them.

SAD. Kalasrade?

KAL. Alas! Alas!
A viewless voice that seemed of Heaven—Hark! Hark!
It comes again.

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

On, Sadak! on!
Seek thou the deep and limpid fountain
That wells underneath the burning mountain;
The fiery hill, in whose caverns low
The waves of Oblivion tranquilly flow;
If true and bold, and pure from sin,
Thou the charmed wave shalt win.
On, Sadak, on!

AMU. What jugglery is this?

SAD. I'll go! I'll go!
She shall be safe till my return, and pure?
Thy word for this, a monarch's word!

AMU. Ay, safe,
And pure. But thou must bring the waters back
Untasted, ere a month have past.

SAD. The time
Is short.

AMU. One month even from this hour. [*March without.*
Thou hear'st
The watch is changing: Well thou know'st the clang
Of those wild instruments; punctual are they

Even as the sun. A moment hence thou'lt hear
The echoing stroke, that tells the household slaves
When evening passes into night. Return
Ere that hour strike.

KAL. Alas! Great Caliph, spare
This desperate quest! or lengthen out the time!

[*A Gong is struck.*

AMU. Thou hear'st. Ere that hour strike.

SAD. I'll go! Ill go.
All hitherto have perished—But I'll go,
And I'll return.

Sestette—AMURATH, SADAK, ACHMET, AZIM, KALASRADE *and* ZULEMA.

SADAK.

I'll go and I'll return, sweet wife!
Shed not a tear for me;
Fearless as to the battle strife
I go for love and thee.

KALASRADE, ZULEMA, *and* AZIM.

Oh, Caliph, hear thy suppliant's prayer,
We bend before thy power;
This agonizing trial spare!
Oh! spare this bitter hour!

AMURATH *and* ACHMET.

Look that thou keep thy time aright,
Or, let what will betide,
Thy Kalasrade in beauty bright
Shall be the Caliph's bride.

KALASRADE.

Sadak, farewell! If go thou must.
Mine only love, farewell!

SADAK.

In those blest spirits put thy trust,
And in our holy cause and just;
Farewell, sweet wife, farewell!

Chorus.

Away, away, no more delay!
Look that thou keep the fated day!
When the Caliph sits in his regal hall,
And the watch is changed at the trumpet's call.
And the gong sends forth its thunder peal;
Then is the hour of woe or weal.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

An Arcade in the Gardens of the Caliph. Double Arches of gilt trellis-work, with gorgeous Plants trailing up them, and almost closing the inmost range of Arches. A Chorus of Maidens with Gifts. A troop of Dancing Girls.

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

Waken to pleasure,
Lady sweet!
Lo! an empire's treasure
Is spread at thy feet.
Here be shawls of Cachmere fine,
Rubies from Bucharia's mine,
The pear-shaped pearls of Oman's bay,
And gold mid Yemen's sands that lay.

Waken to pleasure,
Lady bright!
The dance's gay measure,
The song of delight;
The airy dance where glittering feet
Shake the belled anklets as they beat,

And airy songs, as light as they,
Where the merry voices sport and play.

[*A Dance, during which* ZULEMA *enters.*

ZUL. Be still, kind maids! My joyless sister loathes
All sound of revelry. Once she was gay
As a young antelope amid the hills,
And beautiful as is the lotus cup
Floating above the waters; now she pines
Like a transplanted flower.

[*Exeunt Maidens severally during the Song.*

Song—ZULEMA.

How beautiful the lotus flower
Upon its native stream,
Where through the cool Acacia bower
The sun at noontide's fervid hour,
Scarce glanced his trembling beam.

But drooping now that lotus flower,
Torn from its native stream,
Far from the cool Acacia bower,
It languishes in noon's bright hour,
And withers in the beam.

ZUL. She comes.

Enter KALASRADE, *followed by* AMURATH.

KAL. Pursue me not, bold man! Three days
At least are mine. Caliph, thy kingly word
Was pledged to leave me and my misery
In peace for one bright moon. And now thou drag'st me
From the pomegranate thicket's loneliest nook,
Where clustering orange trees do make at noontide
A twilight shade, thou drag'st me from that darkness
So like the tomb, into this sunny world

Of gaudy wretchedness. Away, away.

AMU. I could no longer live without the light
Of those fair eyes, my sun. Away from thee
I weary of my splendid destiny.

Song—AMURATH.

What are those signs of regal sway,
That mortals envy and obey?
The throne, a strait uneasy couch
Of hard and ponderous gold;
The sceptre, palsying to the touch,
Stern, heavy, dull, and cold.
The crown, beneath whose glittering round,
The tightened temples throb and bound;
What are they all but shining pains,
Enamelled fetters, jewelled chains?

A wealthier monarch I would be;
Lord of a nobler treasury;
My richest diamonds I would seek
In those dark dewy eyes;
My rubies in the blushing cheek
Which shames their orient dyes.
The pageantries and toys of power,
Show dim beside love's myrtle bower;
I'd yield them all, state, sceptre, throne,
To call young Kalasrade mine own.

KAL. That hour shall never come.

AMU. Nay, in three days
Thou wilt be mine.

KAL. Is Sadak dead? Hast heard
That he is dead?

AMU. No tidings have arrived

Of him or of his vessel. When ye parted
(I speak it in his honour) he dispersed
And quieted the murmuring soldiery,
Who had followed for thy rescue; then embarked
On board a gallant ship. But he went forth
To certain death. The bowstring or the block
Were not a surer fate.

KAL. And I that loved him
Better than life—I was the fatal cause
Of this so fatal voyage. Yet why despair,
Till those three days be ended? I have faith
In that sweet music of the air; high faith
In him and in his righteous purpose. No,
I'll not despair.

Duet—AMURATH *and* KALASRADE.

KALASRADE.

One trembling hope remains to cheer
My throbbing heart amidst its fear;
Trembling, yet strong as woman's trust,
And our thrice holy cause and just

AMURATH.

One lingering hope remains to cheer
Thy trembling heart amidst its fear,
Ah! lovely lady, thou wilt rue
That fear unkind, that hope untrue.

KALASRADE.

If fail that hope, then, tyrant, know
The enduring might of woman's woe;
Content all tortures to abide,
Rather than reign the Caliph's bride

AMURATH.

Yes, when arrives the fatal hour,
Proud beauty, thou shalt own my power;
Yes, in that hour, whate'er betide,
I'll bear thee hence the Caliph's bride.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Enchanted Island.

A Volcano, emitting smoke and occasional fire, in the back-ground. The Mountain sinks gradually as it approaches the front, and a stream of burning lava is seen issuing from the Crater, and crossing diagonally from one side of the stage to the other, beginning near the top, and disappearing behind the opposite wing, about half-way up the scene. Behind the lava between that and the crater of the volcano, a magical tree is seen, bearing clusters of splendid fruit; and in front, extending half-way to the roof of the theatre, is a nearly perpendicular rock, so constructed as to open and disclose the interior of a cavern.

Enter SADAK.

Grand Scena—SADAK.

Yes! I am saved, I only! From the wreck
None 'scaped but my most wretched self, alone
To struggle with my fearful destiny.
'Tis scarce
An hour since we were gently gliding on
With lightsome summer airs, o'er summer seas,
Hope in each heart. The mariner aloft,
Saw the lone isle, and gaily shouted "Land!
"Land! Land!" A moment paused he, then again

With voice subdued and deepened, "Land!" he cried,
"Land! Land! The fiery hill! The Enchanted Isle!"
And with that word of fate dropp'd on the deck
Death struck. Fear came on all; and then the storm
Burst in its terrible glory; lightning flashed,
And thunder pealed, and the wind lashed the deep
To fury, tossing the fierce eddying wave
To meet the fiercer hail. The vessel rocked;
Sails shivered; cordage cracked; and strong masts fell;
The straining hull panted, and heaved, and groaned,
As mourning her brave crew; one crash, one shriek,
Stunning and piercing, and the good ship sank,
And her stout seamen were as sea-weed strewn
Upon the ocean surge;—I only saved,
I only, to abide my mystic doom.
Hold firm, my heart! I live: saved to endure,
To dare—Why not to do? Hear me, bright Sun,
That I have worshipped as a symbol pure,
Of the Immortal Essence, fount of light,
Friend of bold aims and deeds that court the day,
Hear me and aid! and thou, young glittering moon,
A milder sun! and ye, fair planet-stars,
That smile around her crescent argentine,
Mute witnesses of many a true-love vow,
Hear me, Oh hear! And ye, stern elements,
Yet in your sternness kind, the stormy winds
That wafted me, the ocean that disgorged,
The cold earth that received me, and the red
And sulphurous fire beneath whose smouldering glow,
The magic fountain flows, hear me, Oh hear!

Air—SADAK.

Sun, king of day and light,
Friend of the brave;

Moon, queen of tranquil night,
Calm as the grave;
Stars, in your hour of might,
Listen and save!

Sea, o'er whose pearly crest,
Stormy winds rave;
Earth, from whose mountain breast,
Lurid fires wave;
And thou, pure Fount of Rest,
Listen and save!

[*At the end of the Air, a wild Chorus of Laughter is heard from Invisible Spirits under the Stage.*

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Ha! ha! ha!

SAD. What sounds unfriendly break upon mine ear.
Unfriendly and derisive? Sure some demon!

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Ha! ha! ha!
Sun and Moon and Earth and Fire
Have heard and scorned thy vain desire.
Ha! ha! ha!
Ne'er till the fruit from the burning mountain,
Be laid by the side of the mystic fountain;
Ne'er till beneath the single shock
Of a human arm burst yon massive rock;
Ne'er till he vanquish the Snake of the Cave,
Shall mortal approach the charmed wave.
Ha! ha! ha!

SAD. Be still, fell augury!—Ah, gentler strains,
I know ye and I love ye! Cheeringly
Ye fall upon my heart.

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

On, Sadak! on!
Pluck the fruit from the fiery mountain,
To lay at the side of the mystic fountain;
If true and bold and pure from sin,
Thou the charmed wave shalt win.
On, Sadak! on!

SAD. Blest spirits, I obey. Strengthen me, Heaven.

[SADAK *begins to climb with great apparent difficulty the face of the precipice, and afterwards crosses the stream of lava, and plucks the magic fruit, as indicated by the several directions and exclamations of the alternate Choruses.*

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Ha! ha! ha!
These mortals woo death as the bridegroom his bride!
Fifty have fallen from the slippery side,
Fifty have sunk in the burning tide.
Ha! ha! ha!

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

The brave man woos peril, as the bridegroom his bride,
On and climb the slippery side;
Fear not thou the burning tide!
On, Sadak! on!

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS

Ha! ha! ha! He's on the brink;
It crumbles! It crumbles!

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

He shall not sink!
He doth not quail! He doth not shrink!
On, Sadak! on!

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Ha! ha! The mellow fruit grows high;
And the fire-shower mounts between that and the sky.
Ha! ha! ha!

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

He clings to the bough;
He hath pluck'd it now.
The work is begun:
The fruit is won.

[SADAK *rushes from the Mountain with the fruit in his hand, which he places on a detached fragment of rock by the side of the stage, and draws his sword.*

SAD. So far I triumph. Now the cave! Good sword,
That never failed me yet, frail instrument
Wert thou 'gainst this charmed rock, but that I trust
In holier spells, in virtuous wedded love,
Valour and truth and dauntless constancy,
And those invisible spirits whose soft airs
Breathe as a hope around me.

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Ha! ha! ha!

SAD. Avaunt, fell fiends! one stroke for Kalasrade
It parts! It parts!

[*The rock parts, discovering a cave with the magic fountain flowing at the back, and the* NYMPH OF THE FOUNTAIN

leaning over it. Before the water a huge Serpent is represented coiling round the naked branches of a withered tree. The snake should extend nearly from side to side of the cavern, and be placed so high as to admit of the fountain and the NYMPH *being seen underneath. The lava disappears, the Volcano is quiet, and a soft tranquil light is shed over the back of the stage. The Snake sees* SADAK, *and menaces him as he advances.*

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Dost mark yonder serpent who hisses so loud,
With the eye so bright and the crest so proud?
Ha! ha! ha!

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

On, Sadak! on!

[SADAK *is advancing with his sword against the Serpent, who glides on to meet him, when, pausing, he recollects himself, and turns back for the fruit.*

SAD. The fruit! the magic fruit.

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

On, Sadak! on!
Place thou the fruit of the fiery mount,
Close by the side of the mystic fount,
Place it full in the serpent's sight;
So shalt thou quell his glittering might;
On, Sadak! on!

[SADAK *places the fruit by the side of the fountain, the Serpent sees and feeds on it and remains quiet.*

SAD. He tastes and he is still. Nymph of the fount,
Gracious and fair, may mortal dare approach
Thy charmed wave?

NYMPH OF THE FOUNTAIN.

Come near and taste the cup!
Drink! Thirst is born of toil; and thou hast toiled
Heavily.

SAD. Thanks, bright spirit!

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Ha! ha! ha!

NYMPH OF THE FOUNTAIN.

Why dost thou pause! Drink! drink! the draught is cool,
And thou art weary. Wherefore dost thou pause?

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

Alas! Alas!

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Ha! ha! ha!

SAD. Again! Nay, if the fiends rejoice, some evil
Lurks in the sparkling cup. Now I remember,
The untasted waters must be straight conveyed
To Amurath.

NYMPH. Art thou so happy, then,
That thou refusest man's chief balm, Oblivion?
Drink! Thou art faint.

SAD. Fair Spirit, man is born
Still to remember, never to forget
His duty or his love. I will not taste
The enchanted wave.

CHORUS OF EVIL SPIRITS.

Lost! lost! lost!
Our last hope is crossed,

And we must go
To the realms of woe,
Lost! lost! lost!

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

'Tis done! 'tis done!
The waters are won!
Firm to resist, as in peril he's brave,
Sadak hath vanquished the fiend of the cave;
And the Nymph of the Fountain, our mistress so gay,
O'er earth, air, and ocean, may frolic and play,
Free as the moonbeams that round her stray.

[*The* NYMPH OF THE FOUNTAIN *advances.*

NYMPH OF THE FOUNTAIN.

Thanks, Sadak, thanks! whose valour hath released
Me, thrice three hundred years a captive. Thanks,
Bold warrior! Bear with thee the untasted cup,
Evil to the evil. We must hence; for time
Flew by unnoted in thy magic voyage,
And the great hour approaches. Radiant car,
I mount thee once again! Mount with me, thou
Brave warrior. Gentle spirits circle us.

[SADAK *and the Nymph mount her car, which has descended during the foregoing speech, and are borne away over the back of the Stage, whilst the Good Spirits sing—*

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

'Tis done! 'tis done!
The waters are won!
And the Nymph of the Fountain, our mistress so gay,
O'er earth, air, and ocean, may frolic and play,
Free as the moonbeams that round her stray.
The waters are won!
'Tis done! 'tis done!

SCENE III.

An Apartment in the Caliph's Palace, with a lattice window, after the Eastern fashion, half open and looking into a garden. The light, never being strong, gradually darkens, as evening comes on.

Enter AZIM, KALASRADE, *and* ZULEMA.

KAL. Hast thou heard aught of Sadak?
AZIM. Lady, no!
But Amurath approaches. He hath sent
To warn us of his coming, and commands
That the loud gong, whose sound proclaims the time
As measured by the sinking water-cup,
Shall be suspended in the regal hall,
And thou in presence there; that he may claim
At the true moment his appointed bride.
KAL. Alas! alas!
ZUL. How fast the hours have flown!
'Twilight is thickening, soon those stars of day,
The jasmine flowers, will disappear, replaced
By the bright fire-flies flickering through the grove.
KAL. Look out again. See if my Sadak come.

Trio—AZIM, KALASRADE, *and* ZULEMA.

KALASRADE.

O'er the far mountain, and through the deep valley,
Doth none come to succour the poor Kalasrade?
Look where the path gleams through yon forest alley,
Look where it winds round the rock's darkening shade.

ALL.

O'er the far mountain and through the deep valley,
None comes to succour the poor Kalasrade;
None where the path gleams through yon forest alley,
None where it winds round the rock's darkening shade.

ZULEMA.

See yonder flash like a bright spear advancing:
Comes Sadak to succour the poor Kalasrade?
No, 'twas but the light on the rice-bird's wing glancing,
As she sought her high nest in the bowery glade.

ALL.

O'er the far mountain and through the deep valley,
None comes to succour the poor Kalasrade;
None where the path gleams through yon forest alley,
None where it winds round the rock's darkening shade.

AZIM.

Hark to yon sound like a fiery steed rushing,
Comes Sadak to succour the poor Kalasrade?
No, 'twas but the brook o'er its pebbly bed gushing,
As foaming and chafing the tiny waves played.

ALL.

O'er the far mountain and through the deep valley,
None comes to succour the poor Kalasrade;
None where the path gleams through yon forest alley,
None where it winds round the rock's darkening shade.

ZUL. See, how she sinks upon the couch! 'Twere best
Leave her awhile; a moment's breathing space,
Ere Amurath demands her presence.

Must seek the Caliph. Would that I might hope
To change his purpose. [*Exeunt* AZIM *and* ZULEMA.

[KALASRADE *remains on the Couch. A March is heard at a Distance, and she starts up, and comes to the front of the Stage.*

Grand Scena—KALASRADE.

What do I hear? The hated sounds that tell
The tyrant's dread approach. Oh! strengthen me
To bear this trial, Love, pure wedded Love.
And brave Despair! Living or dead, I'll still
Be faithful to my Sadak. Could he live
And fail me at this fatal hour? No! no!
He's dead! He's dead! But I'll be faithful. Spirits!
Blest spirits of the air! at whose behest
I craved those mystic waters, listen now,
Look down upon me—aid me! They are silent;
And darkness comes apace, Earth, air, and heaven
Abandon me in my extremest need.

Air.

My dreaded foe is here,
In pomp of power arrayed;
The fearful hour of doom draws near,
And none arrives to aid.

One only stay have I,
Grim death, the wretch's friend;
I can but die, I can but die,
And bid my sorrows end! [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

The same Hall in AMURATH'S *Palace which closed the first Act. A Throne, &c. A Large Gong suspended at the Back of the Stage, and one Man mounted near it with a hammer as if to strike, whilst another near him is watching the sinking of a Cup in the Water. The Stage filled with Guards, Slaves, &c.* AMURATH *on the Throne.* ACHMET *standing near him;* AZIM, KALASRADE, *and* ZULEMA *on one side.*

CHORUS OF GUARDS AND SLAVES.

Hail! hail to Amurath! hail! hail!
Thou greatest King of many great,
Whose will is law, whose word is fate,
Hail! hail to Amurath! hail! hail!

AMU. Fair Kalasrade! nay, turn not thus aside,
I would but tell thee, that as yet we hear
Nothing of Sadak; that the fated hour
Approaches. See, the cup is sinking! Hark!
They change the watch!

[*The same warlike Music is heard without as in the last Scene of the first Act.*

Pass but a few brief moments,
And thou art mine.

KAL. All human hope is vain;
Once more let us invoke a higher power.

Invocation—KALASRADE, ZULEMA, AZIM, *and the Rest.*

Spirits, whose song was of no earthly mould,
If e'er ye may again communion hold
With erring mortals, aid us, guide us now;
Spirits, before your gentle power we bow!

AMU. Surely the time is up! Prepare to strike
A thunder peal! Now! now!

[SADAK *and the* NYMPH OF THE FOUNTAIN *appear in the Car, and descend slowly to the Centre of the Stage.*

CHORUS OF GOOD SPIRITS.

'Tis done! 'tis done!
The waters are won!
And the Nymph of the Fountain, our mistress so gay,
O'er earth, air, and ocean, may frolic and play,
Free as the moonbeams that round her stray.

AMU. Again this jugglery! And Sadak here
Smiling and triumphing! But they are still
My captives! She shall yet be mine.

SAD. *(Advancing from the Car.)* Dread sire,
I bring the Waters of Oblivion. Lo!
The untasted cup!

NYMPH. Drink, Caliph!

SAD. Kalasrade!

KAL. My Sadak!

AMU. Touch her not! She still is mine!
Will no one part them?

NYMPH. Caliph, drink!

AMU. I will,
Remembering the ancient prophecy,
That fortunate for Persia and for love
Would be the draught. Part them.

[*The Caliph drinks and falls down dead.*

ACH. He dies!

NYMPH. He's dead!
Death is the price man pays for cold oblivion;
Memory and life are one. Great Amurath
Is dead! Happy for Persia, that hath lost

A ruler all unskilled to rule himself;
And fortunate for love, chaste wedded love,
For Sadak and for Kalasrade! Farewell!
Ye to your home! I to the upper air!

[*The* NYMPH *ascends slowly in her car, which is supported by clouds, that meet about her from different parts of the Stage; and during her ascent the following Chorus is sung:—*

Chorus.

She sails away in her radiant car,
Pure and bright as a planet-star;
And viewless spirits circle her round,
The gentle spirits of air and sound.
Blessings be with them where'er they go,
Who brought us bliss in the hour of woe.

[*During the ascent of the Car, the Scene has been changed to the second Scene of the first Act, the Garden of* KALASRADE'S *Palace, with the Palace itself splendidly illuminated in the Background, and as the singers of the preceding Chorus part, the Chorus of Maidens with their garlands advance and sing.*

CHORUS OF MAIDENS.

Oh! weave the rose, the dewy, dewy rose,
The peerless queen of flowers,
Till the columned hall as brightly glows,
With wreath upon wreath of the dewy rose,
As in May the garden bowers.

CHORUS OF ALL THE SINGERS.

For Sadak is come
Victorious home
To gladden his own Kalasrade;

His dangers are done,
And his battles are won,
By the spirits' beneficent aid.

Then weave the rose, the dewy, dewy rose,
The peerless queen of flowers,
Till the columned hall as brightly glows,
With wreath upon wreath of the dewy rose,
As in May the garden bowers.

INEZ DE CASTRO:

A TRAGEDY.

In Five Acts.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Alphonso, King of Portugal.
Don Pedro, his Son.
Don Manuel, his Minister.
Count d'Aguilar, the Castillian Ambassador.
Don Antonio, one of the Council of Portugal.
Don Alvarez, Captain of the Guard.
Don Garcia, a Young Nobleman.
Sebastian, Manuel's Servant.

Nobles, Councillors, Officers, Clerks, Huntsmen, Soldiers, Citizens, and Attendants.

Constance, Princess of Castille.
Inez de Castro, a Spanish Lady attending on Constance.

Ladies and Attendants.

The Scene is laid at Lisbon, and the near neighbourhood of that City. Date, 1350; *time of action, three days.*

INEZ DE CASTRO.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Splendid Hall of Audience in the King's Palace at Lisbon; a Throne in the Centre of the Stage.

ANTONIO, GARCIA, *and* ALVAREZ, *meeting in Front; Courtiers and Attendants entering and passing in the Background.*

ALV. Good morrow, Don Antonio. Noble Garcia,
A fair good morrow. Ye are early.
GAR. Sir,
We wait the King's commands.
ANT. 'Tis like to prove
A stirring day.
ALV. A day of stirring mirth,
I grant ye. First to ride with the fair Princess
And her fair train to Setuval's green wood,
To chase the spotted deer; then speeding back,
Haste to the royal banquet at the palace.

Why, good Antonio, so to spend the hours,
Seems to a soldier pleasant idleness;
However, a grave councillor may shrink
From the loud din of revelry.

ANT. Thou'lt hear
Afore the mirth begins, a louder din,
And of a ruder nature. Know'st thou not,
Alvarez, that last night Count d'Aguilar
Arrived at Lisbon with an urgent message
From Philip of Castille?

ALV. To press the nuptials
Betwixt Don Pedro and his sister?

ANT. That
Ye'll know anon. The King receives him here.

ALV. The ambassador will scarce find fitting welcome
From our wild Prince. He better loves to chase
Swift stag, or white-tusked boar, or to pursue
The noble sport of war, and drive the bold
And tawny Moor before his conquering hosts,
Than to lie basking in a lady's smiles
In our soft orange-groves.

ANT. I know not that.
Certain he loves not Constance.

ALV. Yet is she
A stately beauty.

GAR. Her young handmaid Inez
Is fairer.

ANT. So Don Manuel thinks. These girls
Of Spain have made strange havoc 'midst the wits
Of our staid Court. I speak not of such gallants
As ye, whose hearts be light as shuttlecocks
From beauty tossed to beauty; but Don Manuel,
The wise and powerful minister, that he
Should sigh for a young maid, and sigh in vain,

May wake some triumph 'midst these Spanish dames.

ALV. Thou lov'st them not, Antonio.

ANT. My worst wish
Is that they were safe wedded, or safe home.

GAR. The King!

Enter ALPHONSO, MANUEL, *and other Lords. The King seats himself on the Throne,* MANUEL *standing near.*

ALPH. (*To different Attendants.*) Admit the Lord Ambassador.
Say to Don Pedro we require his presence.
(*To* MANUEL.) Count d'Aguilar, I think?

MAN. The same, my liege;
A brave and noble Spaniard.

ALPH. Hast thou seen him?

MAN. But for a moment, Sire.

ALPH. These nuptials surely—
And that hot boy—He comes.

Enter D'AGUILAR, *attended.*

Now, good my lord,
How fares our loving brother in the Faith,
King Philip of Castille?

D'AG. My royal master
Commends him to your Highness in all love
And nobleness; and prays—

Enter PEDRO, *behind.*

Sire, is the Prince
Don Pedro here? Mine errand touches him
As nearly as thyself; since on his union
With our fair Lady Constance hangs the weal
Of either kingdom. Is Don Pedro here?

PED. (*Advancing.*) Ay, to his sorrow. Say whate'er thou wilt,
But what thou wilt, say quickly. Kingdoms, bridals,
Grave state-craft, and light love! Why, we are bound
To the forest, man! the dew lies on the grass;
The air is fresh and moist; our hounds to-day
Will track their quarry well. Come, and I'll show thee
Our woodsman's mysteries. Keep thy dull lessons
For duller seasons, sober afternoons,
Or days of State processions or Court banquets;
This is a morn made for the merry chase—
Come with me to the forest?

D'AG. Sire—

ALPH. For once
Chain thy wild humour, son. Count D'Aguilar,
Disclose thy message.

D'AG. Have I not already
Disclosed its purport? Good my liege, my message
Needs no interpreter. There's not a man
In this fair presence or this populous land,
But, ere a word be spoken, reads right well
Mine errand; knows that I stand here to claim
Instant fulfilment of the solemn league
Betwixt Castille and Portugal; the treaty,
Planned by wise statists, drawn by learned lawmen,
Signed by two mighty sovereigns, hailed and blest
By the universal people, whose chief clause
Binds Don Alphonso's warlike son to wed
Don Philip's beauteous sister. The fair Princess,
Reposing on the sacred faith of nations,
And that great bond of honour, a King's word,
Came at your bidding, full of loyal trust,
To meet and to espouse her plighted lord;
But he—

PED. I was in Africk, as the Moors,
The brave who fell, the base who fled, can witness.
Ask the white bones that strew the sands of Fez,
The nimble slaves that shrouded them in Oran,
And they will be my answer. I knew nothing
Of thee or of thy treaty,

D'AG. But ye are still
Unwedded! Months have passed—I fear to count
How many, lest the simple sum should seem
Too deep reproach—since conqueror from Africk
Don Pedro came; and still they are unwed;
And therefore sends Don Philip to demand—

PED. Demand! demand! Why, father, dost thou hear?
Count D'Aguilar, speaking in the great name
Of Philip of Castille, demands—Dost mark me?—
Demands of King Alphonso prompt obedience
To his high will! Since when is Portugal
Don Philip's tributary, or her King
His slave?

MAN. So please your Highness, you misconstrue
The Lord Ambassador. He claims obedience
Not to his King's behest, but to the power
Of a signed treaty, to the honoured name
Of Don Alphonso, to the faith of kings,
The general weal of nations. 'Tis in friendship
To Portugal's great princes that he seeks
An instant union.

PED. That he comes with threats,
Reproaches, and defiance, to compel
Such union, to demand—

ALPH. Sirs, ye forget
The presence where ye stand. Thou, whose wild will
And hot impatience break with hasty clamour
The message of Castille; and thou, usurping

Mine office of rebuke. My lord, say on.

D'Ag. That which I come to sue, or to demand,
If the sound better please his Highness' ear,
Is a prompt answer. It stands in his choice
To annul or ratify this high alliance.
Don Pedro, wilt thou wed the lady?

Ped. No!
I tell thee no, Sir Count! Didst ever hear
A brave man yield compliance to a threat?
No! 'Tis a short word and of easy speech—
However new to courtier's utterance—
A brief and homely message; 'twill not burthen
Thy memory, or perplex thee with nice terms,
Or dainty phrases. Tell King Philip, No!
A bold and manly No!

D'Ag. Then must grim war—

Ped. War! Said he war? Why, since the Moor was quell'd—
How long is that, Alvarez?—we have lain
In lazy peace. My armour 'gainst the wall
Hangs rusting; my good sword almost forgets
My unaccustomed hand. Talk'st thou of war?
Oh! for a three days' ride in fair Castille,
I and my chivalry! Our pennons waving
On your proud hills, our lances glittering bright
In your hot sun, and your rich pastures ploughed
By the quick trampling of our barbed steeds!
Oh! for a three days' ride in fair Castille,
To meet King Philip man to man, or one
To two, or with my knights alone to vanquish
His kingdom's power! Reproached and threatened, I
Pedro of Portugal! and he a King
Of flocks and herds! Thou hast my answer:—No!
A bold and honest No!—What ho! Give order

To lead my courser to the Alcantara,
I'll mount him there.—Say to King Philip, No!

[*Exit* PEDRO.

D'AG. A grievous answer! Sire, with a sad heart
Yet a most constant spirit, slow to offend,
But quick to punish insult, my great master—

ALPH. Hold, my good Lord Ambassador! Restrain
The rash defiance, which upon thy lips
Sits hovering. Give't no utterance. There be words
A King upon his throne may never hear
And pardon.

D'AG. Yet Don Pedro, Sire—

ALPH. Don Pedro!
Why 'tis a gallant of as wild a temper
As the unbroken Barbary steed, which he,
And only he can rein; chafing at spur
Or curb; hot, fiery, dangerous; but withal
The noblest offspring of a noble race,
My brave and princely son. Somewhat to-day
Hath waked his fiercer mood; but I am King,
And never subject better knew the awe
That waits that word than Pedro. Hear my answer
To thy proud message. Thy rash threat I cast
Unheeded from me. Needless 'twere to say
How little we fear war; our valiant people
And our thrice valiant son bear victory
On their spear-tops. We are in war so strong,
That we may calmly own our love of peace,
And frankly tell to Philip's messenger
How dear we hold the alliance of King Philip.
Have we not Paynim foes, that we should fight
Our Christian brethren? Be we not neighbours, Count,
And should we not be friends? A mountain path,
A wandering brook divide, and join our lands:

The tree that grows in our fair Portugal
Throws its broad shadow on your pleasant Spain,
And the wild goat that browses on the hill
Unconsciously bestrides the invisible line
That war would trace in bloody charactery.
Say to thy monarch that Alphonso's honour
Is pledged to their high treaty; point by point,
And clause by clause; his honour and his crown
Are pledged to their fulfilment. For these nuptials,
Rest in our Court awhile an honoured guest,
And thou thyself shalt give the queenly bride
To her bold bridegroom. Nay, this is no time
For answer. To the woods, my lords! Thou'lt ride with us,
Count D'Aguilar? The Princess and her train
Are bound to Setuval. We'll show thee sport,
My Lord Ambassador.

D'Ag. I wait your Highness.

Alph. We'll summon thee anon. Come, good Antonio!

[*Exeunt* Alphonso, Antonio, Garcia, Alvarez, *and other Lords.*

Manuel *and* D'Aguilar *remain.*

Man. A moment, D'Aguilar?

D'Ag. Now for a shrewd
And subtle supplement to the smooth speech
Of the smooth King! Fair-seeming praise of peace,
And soft persuasive prayers to bide awhile
Amongst ye!

Man. That is sure already.

D'Ag. Sure!
What hinders but I bear Don Pedro's insults
To Philip's Court? What hinders but I hurl
A brave defiance in his teeth?

Man. Thy duty.

Thou art wise, Count D'Aguilar, too wise to break
A truce 'twixt Christian nations, when the Moor,
Thine old hereditary foe stands watching
Before thy gates; and for a word, a sound
That perished in the utterance, a breath
Instantly mingled with the common air!
Thou art too wise, my Lord Ambassador.

D'AG. Yet were I hot as this mad Prince of thine—

MAN. Why there again! a soldier held as rude
As winds in March, as boisterous as the waves
That chafe the Atlantic sea.

D'AG. 'Tis pity of him;
More fortunate captain, or more valiant knight.
Ne'er rode against the Moor.

MAN. A valiant knight;
A very fortunate captain. He would find
Scant greeting from King Philip that provoked
A strife 'twixt him and Pedro.

D'AG. And withal
A man of a rare presence. Never saw I
In court or camp a statelier gentleman
Or one of nobler bearing. A man moulded
To win a lady's eye.

MAN. True! true!

D'AG. And yet,
Now in his very May of life, to shun
A youthful beauty, flying to the woods
To shield him from fair woman. Strange!

MAN. Most strange,
An' the Prince shunned all women.

D'AG. Ha!

MAN. The Princess
Came not alone.

D'AG. What mean'st thou?

MAN. D'Aguilar,
I am not of them to whom men bring loose tales
Of wanton dalliance or court scandal, light
And idle as the wind. Men dare not pour
Into my graver ear the trifling talk
That triflers love. Yet I have heard a tale
Of Pedro and a Spanish maid—

D'AG. Of whom?

MAN. Hearken! When first the Prince returned from Africk,
As duly day by day he sought the Palace,
Where, with her maiden train, fair Constance dwells,
As ever pilgrim bent at saintly shrine
In blest performance of some pious vow.

D'AG. Goes he not now?

MAN. Now at untimely hours,
Deep midnight or by the pale light of dawn
He hovers round the walls.

D'AG. And ye suspect—

MAN. Watch, mark and judge. The King, who holds suspicion
The monarch's vice, as I the statesman's virtue,
Disbelieves, or says he disbelieves, the tale;
Yet every hour with more intense desire
Urges Don Pedro's marriage with the Princess.
Press on these bridals, D'Aguilar, and serve
Two kings, two kingdoms. Press these bridals, Count.

D'AG. Another! There's but one could vie with Constance.
Thou dost not deem them wedded?

MAN. No. A law,
An old wise law, part of our very state,
Declares that whoso, being a subject born,
Native or alien, weds the kingdom's heir

Shall die. He would not place her in that peril.

D'Ag. She hath still been held a chaste and virtuous lady.

Man. She wears his gifts. The jewelled attaghan
Plucked from dead Hamet on the sands of Fez,
A boy-like weapon fit for maids or boys,
Reposes in her girdle. Sportive gift,
And open; but as some blest talisman
Doth Inez wear that dagger. Mark her, Count!
She hath nor eye nor ear for any man
Save Pedro. Mark him well; he hath nor look
Nor word save for fair Inez.

D'Ag. Why 'twas rife
At our Castillian Court that thou thyself
Didst woo—

Man. Think not of me; watch him. Even now
His horses wait him at the Alcantara
That he may pass her palace gate, and catch
One glance of that rare beauty, or one sound
Of that sweet voice, or breathe but the same air
That hath fanned her fair cheek. Go! mark them well,
And press these bridals, Count; be sure thou press
These bridals.

D'Ag. I'll not fail. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Garden.

Enter Pedro *and* Inez.

Ped. Nay, stay thy steps, my Inez. We are here
Safe from surprisal, sweetest. Why, I found thee
Far from the house, alone. What eye should trace us
In the green labyrinth of these garden bowers?
Gaze not around so fearfully.

INEZ. Art sure
None saw thee leap the wall?
PED. Full sure.
INEZ. That none
Will miss—Where waits thy train?
PED. On the Alcantara,
Steed, squire, and page.
INEZ. Have they no guess?
PED. Not one;
Unless my Barbary steed, who with quick instinct,
Soon as he feels his master on his back,
Turns hitherward unguided. Thou art trembling
Like a bird newly caged.
INEZ. Here in broad day!
PED. There is no danger, sweet. This fear of thine
Casts a dark shadow o'er our meeting joys.
Whom dost thou dread?
INEZ. All that surround me, Pedro.
Oh! there is doubt amongst them, jealous doubt;
And they regard me with stern angry eyes,
Or cold averted looks; they speak to me,
When speak they must, in brief and formal phrase,
Or with proud scornful silence pass me by.
I, that bore once the gayest, lightest heart
Of that fair maiden court; the favourite
Of Constance, yet, although the favourite, loved
Of all her train; the merriest heart alive,
Commending my quick fancies to the air
As a young tree its blossoms; I am now
A lonely, moping wretch in these gay bowers,
Of all rejected; shunned as the plague-spot
Of sin were on me, or the Church's ban.
PED. Now foul befall their envious hearts! My Inez,
A day shall come—

INEZ And thou! Think if they saw thee!
There's not a bird stirs on the tree, or flower
Drops from its stalk, but seems to me some espial
Of Constance. Pr'ythee hence! Why cam'st thou, Pedro?
Pr'ythee away!

PED. I came to warn thee, love.
I have seen Count D'Aguilar.

INEZ. When? where?

PED. Even now,
Within my father's palace.

INEZ. Well? Thou hast seen him—

PED. And he—

INEZ. Suspects he? Knows he?

PED. Calm thee, Inez.

INEZ. I am calm. And he?

PED. Pressed sternly this state union.
Now, by St. Michael, had they with like chidings
Urged me to marry thee, with like contempt
I had refused

INEZ. Alas! that fiery temper!

PED. Nay, but for once 't hath done good service, dear one;
For my rash anger hath enforced a pause
In their demand, an unsuspected pause.
There is no danger, so that thou betray not
Our secret. Therefore came I, love, to pray
That thou wouldst shield thee with fresh vows against
Such peril. Swear!

INEZ. Have I not sworn?

PED. But vow
Once more. I doubt I know not what: the Princess;
The King; the Ambassador; and most of all,
The wily Manuel.

INEZ. Would it pleasure thee,

That, like a warrior, I should kiss the blade
Of my small weapon, thy first gift, my bright
And precious attaghan? What need of oaths
When 'tis thy will! But I have sworn, and dearly
Will I redeem that vow. Now haste away!
Pr'ythee begone, dear Pedro! and chain thou
Thine own rash mood.

PED. I will be gentle, sweet,
Even as thyself; or as the fabled lion,
Tamed, reined, and guided by the young boy, Love.

INEZ. Beseech thee, loiter not.

PED. Come with me, then,
To yonder bower, where thou, unseen, may'st see
My safe escape; may watch me till I back,
My peerless steed. Mine Inez, come with me!
Forget these griefs, and think of the blest hour
When love shall know no fear. Sweet Inez, come!

[*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Forest.—A Pavilion in the Background.

ALPHONSO, MANUEL, D'AGUILAR, ANTONIO, GARCIA, *Lords, Foresters, Huntsmen, &c.*, CONSTANCE, INEZ, *and other Ladies.*

ALPH. Nay, nay, my royal huntress! rest awhile
In this fair forest bower. Thou hast done enow
For fame to-day. Art thou not weary, Constance?
CON. No, not a whit. I love the pleasant toil
O'er well for weariness; and oft have tired
Knights, squires, and dames in our Castillian woods.
ALPH. Ay, skill and liking are twin-born: we love
The art we have mastered; we excel in that
We love. How many deer have died to-day
By that fair, slender hand?
ANT. Three, as I think.
GAR. Four, surely four.
D'AG. No, three. One at the brake;
One standing by the pool; and one couched down
Beneath the chestnut shade. Three deer have fallen

By her unerring arrows.

GAR. A true eye!

ANT. And a sure hand!

ALPH. Fair Princess, thou shalt be
The Goddess of the Woods. Hunters shall come
To yield thee worship, as in days of old
To crescented Diana; these huge trees
Thy pillared temple, yonder tent thy shrine,
And we thy priests to chant triumphal hymns,
And tend thy virgin altars. Rest thee, sweet,
The sun rides high.

ANT. (*Apart to* MANUEL.) 'Tis pity that Don Pedro
Saw not the royal nymph. Her skill, her ardour,
Matching his own, had scarcely failed to rouse
The tardy wooer.

MAN. Yet Antonio—Mark me,
I speak not of this princely pair, but man,
As in the gross we view him;—man loves not
To see his cherished passions and pursuits
Lie in faint shadow on a woman's mind,
Reflected in that feebler element,
Like images in water, wavering, dim,
Distorted. Love, like music, often lurks
In seeming discords; and his subtlest springe
Veils in strong contrasts. Mark me, Sir, I speak
Of man in the abstract.

ALPH. Lords! hath any seen
My truant son?

GAR. My liege, one of his train,
Lopez the Falconer, says he saw him plunge
Deep in the forest, as our stately show
Of hounds and horsemen, lords and ladies gay,
Approached to Setuval.

ALPH. Wild, wayward boy!

Count D'Aguilar, thy brave Castillian hounds
Outvoice our Portugals. I deemed ye not
So peerless in the chase. Even these young maids
Be gallant huntresses.

D'Ag. Save one. Fair Inez,
Thou wast a laggard in our sylvan sports,
And when thou cam'st across the prey wouldst tremble,
Grow pale, and shuddering, turn thy steed away
As from a battle-field.

Inez. It is my weakness
To quail at sight of death.

Con. Of death!

Inez. Ay, even
The death of these poor deer. They are so happy,
So innocent, so beautiful, so made
For life and joy. The sunbeams, as they pierce
The leafy cork-trees, fall on their fine limbs
With a gay, glittering light; the painted wood-flowers
Crowd round their delicate feet; the rivulets,
Whereat they slake their thirst, dance sparkling by
Merrily, merrily, as pleased to view
Each gentle head down-bending. Nature smiles
On the fair happy creatures. Man hath taught them
The world's worst lesson—Fear.

Man. Oh, gentlest maid!

Con. In sooth a goodly sermon!

Inez. Yet I blame not
Them who in manly hardihood of soul
Find in the princely chase a princely joy;
Albeit mine own infirm and timorous spirit
Shrink shivering from the sight. We differ all
In temper as in feature. No two leaves
Be quite alike, though growing on one tree.

Man. Oh, wise as gentle!

CON. A right sapient preacher!
Will no one take my veil? Where be my maidens?
INEZ. Madam—
CON. Begone! I need thee not. Young Blanche!
Beatrice! Urraca! Be near me, damsels.
Have I not said begone?

[*Then apart to one of her Ladies.*

Oh, how I loathe
The cold, reluctant, formal offices,
The ceremonial homage, the lip duty
Of yon smooth hypocrite! See how she stands,
With patient downcast looks, seeming to shun
The tender flatteries her feigned tears provoke.
Oh, falsehood fair as heaven, yet black as hell!
Ingrateful traitress! Urraca, it frets
My very soul to see her with that air
Of mute and sad submission, and to know
The secret triumph of her thoughts. My liege,
The day wears on.

ALPH. We are at thy dispose,
Fair Princess!—thy vowed liegemen, to abide
Here in thy sylvan reign, or tread once more
The city no less thine.

Enter ALVAREZ *in a hurried manner.*

Whom seek'st thou, Sir?

ALV. So please you, Sire, the Prince.

INEZ. Wherefore!

ALV. I hoped
To find him here.

ALPH. Seek him elswhere, Alvarez;
He is not amongst us.

INEZ. Hath aught ill befallen?
What wilt thou of Don Pedro?

MAN. (*To* ALPHONSO.) Mark, my liege.
INEZ. Can he not speak?
ALPH. Say forth thine errand!
ALV. Sire,
A vague and nameless fear, too undefined
For words.
INEZ. On! on!
ALV. A fiery steed hath passed
Without a rider, houselled royally.
INEZ. Who saw him?
ALV. A poor woodman.
ALPH. Never doubt
But 'tis some courser of our train.
INEZ. 'Tis Pedro.
What colour were the housings? Crimson wrought
With gold?
ALV. I know not.
INEZ. Wherefore brought ye not
The woodman hither? 'Twas a fiery steed?
ALV. Ay, one that seemed companion of the wind—
A wild steed of the desert, tossing high
His slender head and streaming mane, and spurning
The very ground with his proud tread—a steed
Untamed, untameable.
INEZ. And black?
ALV. As jet.
INEZ. 'Tis he! 'tis he!
ALPH. Knows any man what horse
Don Pedro rode to-day?
GAR. Last night, my liege,
I heard the Prince give order that the roan—
INEZ. I saw him mount Black Saladin. 'Tis he!
And he is dead. Alvarez, out on thee,
Foul raven! Messenger of ill!

ALV. Yet grant
The steed were Pedro's, he may live.
INEZ. Fly! fly!
Search all the forest! Be ye men, and fly not
To Pedro's aid? Oh! if I were as ye—
Fly! fly!
GAR. If such the King's good pleasure—
INEZ. If!
Why, is he not a father? Hence and speed
True tidings back—the truth, the killing truth!
ALPH. Dispatch some skilful huntsmen, Don Alvarez,
To search the woods. [*Exit* ALVAREZ.
I join not this wild fear,
Knowing my son unmatched in sylvan craft,
And skilled to rule the stubbornest steed that e'er
Spurned the hot sands of Araby.
INEZ. He'll die!
He'll die!
MAN. Dost mark her?
D'AG. A strange passion!
CON. Inez!
INEZ. He'll die! he'll die!
CON. Command thyself! Arise!
Quell this strong agony, which casts reproach
Upon thy virgin fame! Arise!
INEZ. I cannot.
ALPH. Lady, what means this passion? At thy side
Stands Pedro's plighted bride, with cheek unblanched
And lip unquivering, and calm, even breath;
Whilst thou—
INEZ. She loves him not. But thou, his father—
Oh! canst thou dally here whilst thy brave son
Lies perishing? Crushed underneath the hoofs
Of that fierce steed, or gored by horrid tusks

Of fiercer boar, bruised, mangled, bleeding, dead—
Dead, or worse, worse !—the fearful living prey
Of animals obscene, grim ravening wolves
Rending the quivering limbs, whilst he—Why waste ye
A moment in delay? Thou art a monarch;
Go pour thy people, thy whole people, King,
Into the woods of Setuval, to seek
And succour thy brave son.

ALPH. Go more of ye!

[*Exeunt* GARCIA *and others.*

Her fears have an infection. Yet I doubt not
Of Pedro's safety—skilled as Theseus
To slay the beast of chase, active and strong
As great Alcides. Tush! he's safe! Yet go!
Go more of ye! [*Exeunt Lords, Huntsmen, &c.*

MAN. Sweet lady, I would buy,
With limb or life, one heaving throb, like that
Which swells thy bosom now.

INEZ. Hush!

MAN. I would be
The wretch thy terror painted, mangled, bleeding,
Dying, that long and living death, to win
One tear of thine. But thou from honest love
Doth turn thee, Inez—

INEZ. Hush, man! hush!

MAN. With scorn
Bitter and hard to bear, whilst—

INEZ. Hush! I say.
Do ye not hear a distant horn? Hark! hark!

D'AG. Her sense is wandering.

INEZ. Hark! the joyful sound
Lives in mine ears; the glad triumphant note
His death-mot.

MAN. All is silence.

INEZ. Hark!

ALPH. Ay, now.

INEZ. He lives! he comes! he's safe! Oh! thanks to Heaven!

Thanks to All-bounteous Heaven!

ALPH. Support the lady.

INEZ. Nay, I am well. He's safe! he's safe!

ALPH. She faints!

Bear her to the Pavilion.

[*Exit* INEZ, *with Ladies, &c. Some go with her, others remain in attendance on* CONSTANCE.

Howsoe'er,

She knew the sound—the mot was Pedro's. (*Apart to* D'AGUILAR.) Count,

Was thy King mad when, with his haughty sister,

He sent this melting beauty? How dispose her?

Guilty or innocent—

Enter DON PEDRO, ALVAREZ, *and other Lords.*

How now, fair son?

A moment since 'twas rife that thou wast dead

MAN. The tale was false it seems.

PED. Wouldst have it true?

Ay, by that paleness The hot flush by times

Deceives; cold wanness never! Stand aside!

The King spake to the Prince, the father's voice

Called on his son. Off from between us.—Sire,

Mine is no glorious story; noble peril

Came not in view, a hunter's trivial tale.

Leaping afoot, to end with one sharp thrust

The agony of a poor panting stag

Pulled down by my brave hounds, my mettled steed,

Scared by their baying, burst from page and groom,

And bounded through the forest, tossing high

His stately head, and snorting with such joy
To feel his freedom, 'twas a joy to see
How, swift as the antelope he darted forth
Crushing each branch that crossed him with the strength
Of the roused lion. My thrice noble horse!
I would not change him for a battle won,
Or a new kingdom. Sirs, take instant order
He be pursued, and proffer a Count's ransom
To him who brings Black Saladin. Yet still
I grieve his flight should have awaked one throb
Of fear, however honouring, for his master.
A father's terrors—

ALPH. Sir, I feared thee not.

PED. A lady's softness—Surely Don Alvarez
Spake of one trembling with affright.

ALPH. Whom seek'st thou?
What quick distemperature hath seized thee?

PED. None;
None, father; none. Came not the Lady Inez
Amongst the royal train?

ANT. She did.

PED. And wherefore
And whither is she gone? Hath Manuel dared—
Where is she gone, I say? To yonder tent? [*Going.*

ALPH. Where goes Don Pedro? Stay him, good Antonio.

ANT. (*To* PEDRO.) May it please it thee, Sir, return.

PED. Is Inez safe?

ANT. She is.

PED. And gently tended?

ANT. Yes.

PED. I ask thee,
By that fair idol which true men adore,
Thy bright unsullied honour, if the lady
Be reverently entreated?

ANT. With all care
And nobleness.
PED. I do believe thee. (*Returning.*) Father,
What wilt thou of thy son?
ALPH. Dost thou not see
The Lady Constance?
PED. Madam, I implore
Your Highness' pardon that, with hasty step
And unobservant eyè—
CON. Beseech thee spare
These slow, unwilling courtesies. Fair Sir,
The offence is none to have o'erpast me here
Unseen, unthought of; if a slight 'tis one
My soul holds gracious. The unpardoned sin,
The deadly scorn, the immedicable wound
Had been to blend with Constance of Castille
Image or thought less pure.—We wait your Highness.
[*Exit, with her Ladies, into the Pavilion.*
PED. Pure! Why the dew-drop which the west wind fans
From the white orange-flower, the down that grows
Upon the wild swan's breast, the snows that crown
The Pyrenean steep are not so pure
As Inez! Pure! Lady, be thou as chaste
As vestal virgin or pale cloistered nun,
Thou wouldst show weak and frail and spirit-stained
Beside the clear of heart, the firm of soul,
Whom thou malign'st. And she hath born this scorn,
And I must bear! Oh, that some stalwart knight
Would doubt thy virtue, Inez!
ALPH. Son—
PED. Not thou,
Not thou, my father!
D'AQ. Prince, I must not hear

Sharp-biting taunt and bitter insult cast
Upon a Princess of Castille. Wert thou
The bravest man of thy brave line—

ALPH. (*To* D'AGUILAR.) My lord,
Thy mission here, which is to thee a shield,
Alike debars thee from intemperate wrath.
(*To* PEDRO.) He comes on a King's message.

PED. Fear not me!
Thou art a safe man, Lord Ambassador,
A licensed railer, a permitted scold,
As chiding woman, or as tonsured monk.
I know thy privilege.

ALPH. (*Taking* D'AGUILAR *apart.*) Count D'Aguilar!

PED. I know thy privilege.

MAN. Prince, these rash insults—

PED. Have I not owned his privilege? And thou too,
The absolute courtier, minister, dictator
Of this our Portugal, who, ruling all,
Wouldst fain rule me; the quaint and clerkly scribe,
Whose delicate hand, inured to the slight pen,
As a young girl's to the needle, never knew
The manly joy to grasp a warrior's sword,—
Thou too art privileged. Rail on! rail on!

MAN. Prince, these vain taunts—

PED. Why dost thou pause? Rail on!
Why stint thy speech? On, mighty minister!

MAN. Thou art my Prince, and I must bear; but wert
thou
Mine equal—

PED. Well?

MAN. Then—No—Thou art a Prince,
And I a subject.

PED. Prince! Sir, I'm a knight,

A soldier, and a man; one trained in camps,
Who little recks of thy court niceties,
And never yet paused in the battle-field
To question a stout foeman's royalty.
Think me thine equal, Sir. Rank is a shield
O'ercumbrous for my use. Think me thine equal.
And then if thou dare fight—

MAN. Speak lower, Prince.
These scoffs would spur a coward to the field.
Meet me where'er thou wilt, and thou shalt find
That I can grasp a sword. Meet me to-night
In single combat.

PED. Willingly; joyfully.
But wherefore not at once?—

MAN. Put up thy sword!
Speak lower, lest they listen. We must meet
Alone.

PED. Why, this sounds like a gallant foe. By Heaven!
I never deemed thee worth a soldier's hate
Till now. On the Alcantara, at sunset;
Or by the Tagus, near the harbour's mouth;
That were more private. They'll not seek us there.
The sands beside the Tagus. By St. Michael!
I never thought to hold thee in such honour.

MAN. I will not fail thee, Sir. We are observed.

ALPH. What saidst thou, Pedro?

PED. Good my liege, Don Manuel
Hath challenged me to meet him in the forest,
And with our hounds run down a fallow deer;—
And I—

ALPH. Enough! Enough! Count D'Aguilar,
We hold to-night a banquet at the Palace,
To honour Lady Constance. Nobles all,

I bid ye to the festival. And now
To horse, my lords, to horse! Go warn the Princess.

PED. (*To* MANUEL.) At sunset by the Tagus' brink.

ALPH. To horse!

To horse!

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in DON MANUEL'S *Palace.*

MANUEL *and* SEBASTIAN.

MAN. The King hath sent the Captain of the Guard
To watch our Palace, say'st thou?
SEB. Good my lord,
The archers line the court.
MAN. Bid Juan lead
My courser to the garden gate. Bring thou
My armour. Quick!
SEB. All egress, noble Sir,
Is barred by the stern guard, and King Alphonso
Himself approaches.
MAN. So! the hot defiance
Found listeners; and the feigned after calmness
Won slight regard. I should have joyed to meet,
This darling of the wars, this cherished son
Of victory, in single fight; but now—
The King approaching too?
SEB. So said the archers.

MAN. Sebastian, hasten to the tapestry chamber,
And bring me straight the vellum book that lies
Beside my couch.

[*Exit* SEBASTIAN.

Certes, I would full fain
Have met thee, Pedro, in the field, and proved
The arm thou hold'st so lightly 'gainst thine own,
Proud Prince of Portugal! I feared thee not,
Champion of Christendom! I would have met thee,
Thee and thy fame in fair and equal fight.
But 'twere a sweeter vengeance, and a deeper,
Winning that lovely one to feed to the full
My hatred and my love. How beautiful
Her very scorn, that shy and timorous maid,
Starting at speech, or touch, with such a grace
As the queen-heron, ere she takes her flight,
When scared by some lone wanderer from her haunt
Beside the mountain pool; or as the doe,
When first she hears the hunter in the brake,
Stands glancing her arched neck and innocent eyes
From side to side, a moment listening stands,
Listening and trembling, ere she darts away.
Oh, to tame that rare coyness! to subdue
That maiden pride! albeit she love not me,
Albeit she love another—

Re-enter SEBASTIAN, *with the Book.*

Now?

SEB. My lord,
The King is on the stair.

MAN. Give instant entrance.
So! So!

[MANUEL *takes the Book, and seats himself with it at a Table, as if immersed in study.*

Enter ALPHONSO.

ALPH. He's deep in study. Rouse him not.
He sits like one entranced, each sense absorbed
In yonder antique book, as men are wrapt
In stirring tidings of to-day, or missives
Late and long-looked-for from far distant friends.
Wait me without.

[*Exit* SEBASTIAN.

From his unconscious lips
The words seem bursting.

MAN. (*Reads.*) "Then Abu Zeyd, the merchant of Bagdad, finding all other means fail, and that, for love of the fair Persian, his son Noureddin still refused to return to Cairo to complete his merchandize, bestowed her in marriage on his slave Abdallah; after which union Noureddin, recovering from his unhappy passion, resumed his voyages, and became one of the wealthiest and most prosperous merchants of Bagdad."

(*Speaks.*) Bestowed her on his slave! Ay, wisdom lurks
Beneath the turban! Strange! how oft these rude
And uncouth legends, told in Arab tents
'Mid the Great Desert, or in populous streets
Of Moorish city, or in freshest bowers
Of Turkish harem,—strange! that tales so old
And so remote, and airy as a dream,
Should yet foreshadow and embody things
That be, passion and action, past event
And coming consequence;—strange! strange! and then
The antidote to this hot poison—Ha!
I crave your Highness' pardon.

ALPH. No excuse.
Thou art studious, Manuel. Wherefore fling aside
The book so hastily? What was the theme?

MAN. A trifle, good my liege.
ALPH. Nay, nay, we know
Our learned minister. Some subtle treatise
Of the grave schoolmen; codes of awful law,
Or deep divinity, or statecraft shrewd.
Make me partaker of thy lore.
MAN. My liege,
A worthless legend.
ALPH. Without farther parley,
Show me this legend, Manuel. As I entered,
I saw thee hanging, like an amorous boy
O'er the first letter from his mistress, pondering
Each word, and starting, as an oracle
Were opened to thy wondering eyes. Nay, more,
I heard the words. I know too much, good Manuel,
Not to know all. The legend, Sir!
MAN. My liege—
ALPH. Straight to thy tale.
MAN. 'Tis a rude Eastern story,
One of the brief and homely tales that lie
Half-hidden among the high imaginings,
The gorgeous fancies of Arabian lore,
Like seedling pearls 'midst the commingling glare
Of rubies, emeralds, amethysts; a rude
And homely tale. A merchant of Bagdad
Had one fair son, a fair and hopeful youth,
Whom he, waxing in years, was training up
To travel to far cities, trafficking
With his rich merchandize, from realm to realm,
A profitable factor; for the youth
Was bold and capable, one whom a father
Looks on with glad, proud eyes; when suddenly
The promise ceased, the hope was turned to fear,
The joy to woe, the pride to shame. Our merchant,

His son being then at Cairo, chanced to purchase
A slave, they called her the Fair Persian, young,
Slender, and delicate, graceful and timorous
Even as the shy gazelle, yet gay and playful
As a wild kidling of the hills.

ALPH. The youth,
Returning, loved this Persian?

MAN. Madly loved.

ALPH. And disobeyed his father?

MAN. Good my liege,
Defied him: sate him idly down in Bagdad,
Abandoning his half-won 'vantages,
His goodly bargains and his golden hopes,
For love of this Fair Persian.

ALPH. And the merchant
Gave her, the smiling mischief, to his slave,
In marriage to his slave? Heard I not so?
Ran not the story thus?

MAN. An' please you, Sire,
So paused the tale.

ALPH. In marriage to another;
And then the youth pursued his better fortune.
They are wise, these unbelievers.—A slight tale!
In marriage to his slave?—A homely story!
And yet in sooth—We hold to-night a banquet,
And long ere this the assembled guests await
Their too-neglectful host. Come, loiterer!
Fair Inez will be there. Is not that name
A loadstar to thee? Art thou turned inconstant?
Hast ceased to love?

MAN. Oh, never! never!

ALPH. Well!

MAN. Yet, if my absence might find grace, a friend
Without the walls expects me.

ALPH, Say a foe,
A royal foe! Why, 'twas mine errand hither,
But that thy tale turned the full tide of thought,
To bid thee, on thy faith and thy allegiance,
Avoid this challenge. Wouldst thou do a treason,
And slay the lineal heir of mighty kings?
Wouldst slay thy Prince? And wouldst thou match thyself,
Being of the common fowl, with the strong bird
That soars nearest the sun? Dost think to 'scape
Unscathed the noblest eaglet that e'er flew
From out our eyrie, the thrice royal bird,
Unparagoned of form or spirit? Thou
Mated with Pedro! Chafe not. Thou art brave;
I know thee valiant. Thou hast oft said No
To the King's will in council, and stood firm,
Even as a rock, against the stormy rush
Of his wild anger;—ay, and he hath thanked thee
When the loud gust was past, hath thanked and loved
thee
The better for thy stubbornness; howbeit
He claim to-night the mastery,—as thou
And my hot son shall prove. I go to join
The feasters. Follow straight. Hearken, Don Manuel!
Take order that the chapel be prepared
For sudden nuptials, graced with all observance
That may beseem a Prince's bridal hour.
Away, and question not, Now to these revels!
MAN. So, so! A bridal! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Magnificent Hall in the Royal Palace. A Splendid Banquet, round which are ranged CONSTANCE, INEZ, *and other Ladies;* COUNT D'AGUILAR, DON ANTONIO, DON GARCIA, DON ALVAREZ, *and other Nobles. A Throne vacant in the centre, which* ALPHONSO, *entering during the Song, ascends. The sides of the Stage filled with Minstrels and Attendants.*

Song.

Alphonso holds a banquet proud
'Midst knight and noble, a glittering crowd;
Knight and noble and lady bright;—
Oh! dart but those eyes of sunny light
A moment's space on the blood-red wine,
And 'twill glow like the ruby of the mine.

Alphonso holds a banquet high
In the pomp of his gorgeous chivalry,
'Midst herald and harper and minstrel throng.
Oh, lady! list to the lowly song,
And waken its spell with thy smile of power,
As the touch of the sun wakes the cistus flower.

ALPH. What, not a word, fair maidens! not a smile
To pay the minstrel! Lady Constance, Inez,
Ye were rare harmonists. I've known the time
When but a wandering snatch of some old air,
Borne on the breeze from the steep mountain side,
Where the lone shepherd-boy lay with his pipe
Cheating the weary day; or tinklings faint
Of gay guitar, in vineyards heard at eve,

Would lure ye from your palace-home to seek
The rude musician: and now Silvio sings,
Your favoured minstrel, sings his courtliest lay
To win your smiles, and ye sit motionless
As effigies carved quaintly out of stone
To deck the rich and monumental shrine
Of saintly votaress, pale, fair, and mute
As statues. Rouse ye, damsels! See ye not
That your cold looks o'ercloud the festival,
Chilling the nimble tongues and dainty wits
Of our gay cavaliers? Rouse thee, fair Princess!
Arouse ye, gallants all! A silent feast
Is sadder than a funeral.

GAR. Good my liege,
We miss Don Pedro's ready mirth.

ALV. Don Manuel
Is absent too.

ANT. Ay; and if silver hairs
May give a privilege to read young hearts,
I'd say that absence is the envious cloud
That hangs o'er beauty's sunny smile. She hath heard
The morning's coil, and trembles at the fear
Of what may chance betwixt two haughty spirits
Chafed to their uttermost bearing; therefore droops
The royal lady, and with sympathy
Alert and tender, droop her maiden train.
But should the Prince appear—

CON. Methinks, fair Sirs,
Ye show scant courtesy to comment thus
Upon a lady's bearing.

D'AG. Scantier still,
To deem a Princess of Castille so poor
Of soul, that she should cling with desperate love
To him who throws the shame of cold neglect

Upon her peerless charms. Ye hold a banquet
To honour Lady Constance, and Don Pedro,
Her royal wooer, her betrothed lord,
Is absent. Anger may be mute and pale
As fear or love.

ANT. But if the Prince and Manuel—

ALPH. Tush! tush! ye know not Pedro—hot and rash,
But kindly and forgiving. None hath seen him
Since he, at noontide, rushed from the Pavilion
Back to his dear-loved woods. A wandering hound,
A falcon unreclaimed, or some brave quarry,
Fleet stag, or strong-tusked boar, hath lured him on
Deep in the forest, and benighted him.
Yet shall we chide the truant. For Don Manuel,
Lo! where he comes.

Enter MANUEL.

(*To* MANUEL.) Is all prepared? The chapel
Blazing with fragrant light? The jewelled altars?
The mitred abbot?

MAN. All.

ALPH. A health, my lords!
A health, Count D'Aguilar! With generous wine
Crown every mantling cup, till the rich juice
Mount o'er the golden rim! Fill high! Fill high!
Now health and bliss to him of Portugal
And her of Spain, the noble and the fair
Who wed to-night. Thou drink'st not, D'Aguilar.

D'AG. The pledge is bridal.

ALPH. So is the intent.

D'AG. And yet the Prince appears not?

ALPH. Brave Castillian,
Thou hast made demand, perchance too preremptory,
Yet with some seeming cause, that our late treaty

Be instantly fulfilled. But we still lack
Meet time for preparation, time to grace
The queenly bride and the immediate heir
Of our old kingdom. Sir, we must tire down
The sun with royal pageants, and outwatch
The moon with merry masques; minstrels must frame
New lays to sing her beauty; coins be struck
With her high impress; marble palaces
Be reared, her fitting shrine; and barges decked,
Gorgeous as that, which on the Cydnus wave
Floated the Egyptian Queen to meet her love.

D'Ag. I cry you mercy, Sire! But was this pledge
A dream? a mockery?

Man. A waking truth.

Alph. Say that the proudest noble of our Court
Wed a young Spanish maid, will not such union
Seem to our brother of Castille a pledge
Of fair intent and honest purposes?
A happy augury of those blest ties
Weaving in Time's great loom? Come forth, fair Inez!
Don Manuel, take thy bride.

Man. Oh, lovely lady,
Turn not away with such disdain! Fair Princess,
Beseech thee, plead for me.

Inez. I'll never wed
Whom I can never love. Sir, hour by hour,
And day by day, have I flung back, at last
With an enforced scorn, the proffered vows
Of this importunate wooer. All the Court
Hath heard the King's command—Bear witness all
To my as firm denial. King Alphonso,
I'll ne'er be Manuel's bride.

Man. Oh, fairest! cruellest!
D'Aguilar, speak! [*Then aside to the* Count.

It is thy cause! Bethink thee
Of all that chanced this morning. She once wed,
Thy mission—plead, man! plead!

[*Then aloud.*

Speak, D'Aguilar!

D'Ag. The lady jests. 'Tis but the coy device
Of conscious beauty, willing to be wooed,
Feigning reluctance, simulating scorn,
Forcing her haughty lips to utter No,
When the consenting heart would murmur Yes.
The general weal demands this union, Inez;
And, in the name of King and country, I
Command thee wed this man.

Inez. Alas! alas!
When I have said I love him not!

D'Ag. Take heed
Thy mounting love soar not so wild a flight
That it fall, spent and broken, like an arrow
Hurled by a heedless marksman.

Alph. Lady Inez,
This match must be accomplished. Send to warn
The priests that we approach.

Inez. What now? even now?
Relent, my liege, relent! Oh, give me not
To one whom I abhor! No, nor bind him,
Howe'er in heat of passion he may woo
The baleful destiny, to one who owns
Such loathing! Oh, be merciful!

Alph. Rise! rise!

Inez. Never till thou hast heard me. I'm an orphan,
A stranger in thy land. I had a father,
A kind, brave father, such a man as thou,
A warrior in the summer of his days,
Full of stern grace, and fiery dignity.

Were he alive—Alphonso, thou art called
The father of thy people:—Wilt thou stoop
To oppress the orphan? Look upon me, King!
Thou hadst a daughter once, a lily flower,
Untimely gathered to her home above;
They who would flatter me have said that I
Was like thy Isabel—Look down upon me,
And for her sake, for her dear sake! He turns
Away! Oh, where to seek for pity!—Lady,
I am as one placed on the dizzy point
'Twixt two great gulphs, on either side the abyss
Of crime yawns to receive me. Listen, Lady,
For very womanhood! We are of one age,
One country, and one sex; defenceless women!
Poor helpless women! Even thou, a Princess,
Thou hast no arms, save tears and sobs and words—
Vainer than tears. Oh! shall we not be true
To one another? Save me! Save me! Once
Thou lov'dst thine own poor handmaid.

CON. I did love thee,
And thou—Inez de Castro, I command
This union. I would snatch thee from the abyss,
The smiling sea of sin, the unfathomed gulph
Of shame; would prop thy woman's weakness, girl,
With a right noble husband. Good my liege,
On to the chapel!

INEZ. Cruel! cruel!

ALPH. Lords,
Lead to the altar. Inez, cast aside
This maiden coyness; cease thy fruitless struggles;
Subdue thy stubborn will. On to the altar,
And learn the wisdom of the weak—obedience.

MAN. Sweet Inez, come. Forgive this boisterous wooing;
The worshipped wife shall smile in after years

At the vain terrors of the bride, shall find
Her marriage chains light garlands.

INEZ. Ay, such chains
As the poor victim in the heathen rites,
Dragged to the altar by gay flowery wreaths
To die, a crowned and gilded sacrifice,
Hallowed, and garlanded, and slain!—Avaunt!
My flesh creeps at thy touch, as loathly worms
Were twisting round my fingers. Man, avaunt!
Oh, fatal, fatal promise! Is there none
To shield a noble lady, in worse strait
Than ever Christian maiden hath endured,
When captive to the Moor? Be ye not knights
Sworn to defend the oppressed, to avenge the injured,
To guard defenceless women? Oh, for him,
That soul of chivalry!

CON. Will she dare name him?

ALPH. Lead to the altar; if need be, by force.

INEZ. Now mercy on me, Heaven! Pedro! my Pedro!

Enter DON PEDRO.

PED. What mean these echoing shrieks and wild appeals
To pitying Heaven? Who called on Pedro? Inez!

INEZ. I have kept my vow! I have kept my vow!

PED. I am here,
Here to protect thee. Which of ye dares touch
This panting trembler now?

MAN. Even from my Prince
I dare to claim the lady.

PED. Thou! Ay, here,
Within the charmed circle of a court
In the King's presence, hemmed about by guards
And women, here thou art brave of look and word,
Bold to do evil, a right valiant courtier.

As ever dared a crime. Where wast thou, Sir,
At sunset, when beside the Tagus' brink
I paced impatiently, my sword unsheathed
For speedier combat, and my helmet doffed
To catch the first sound of thy horse's tread?
Now, by St. Michael! when no foe came near
When the light paled on river and on sky,
And thou not there, I deemed thee prisoned, chained,
And flew to free thee.

MAN. The King's men-at-arms
Compassed my palace.

PED. And I find him here,
In fullest freedom! Slave! thy guards were fears,
Base cowardice thy fetters.

ALPH. Son, my will,
His Sovereign's awful threats and stern commands,
Compelled submission, with reluctance shown
Even to his King—submission calm, and firm,
And loyal, such as true men yield. Show thou
A like obedience, Pedro, and release
The lady.

PED. Wherefore?

ALPH. Even now the priests
Await her at the altar.

PED. She's my wife!
Father, she is my wife!

ALPH. Thy wife?

PED. My dear
And wedded wife.

INEZ. My husband!

PED. Oh! forgive me,
That, with strong vows of secresy, I chained
Thy lips, my Inez, leaving thee a prey
To hateful suitors and sharp jealousies.

INEZ. My own dear husband!
MAN. Wedded! 'Tis a feint
To stay our nuptials. Wedded! What bold priest
Would so defy his King? What Church would hallow,
What madman witness, the unlawful rites?
A feint!—a shallow feint!
PED. My liege—to thee
I deign no answer—In St. Vincent's Church,
With holy book and saintly benison,
The learned priest Anselmo joined our hands,
Before an aged and most pious woman,
Good Monica Manrique.
MAN. *(Writing in his Tablets.)* Monica
Manrique and the priest Anselmo. Lady—
Will she avouch the tale? Inez, art thou
Don Pedro's wife?
INEZ. Ay, his chaste wedded wife!
He hath avouched it. Blessings on thee, Pedro,
My husband, my deliverer, that hast wiped
Reproach away and scorn; hast set me free
From the hot chase of lust and the cold sneer
Of envy. Blessings on thy head!
CON. Such blessings
As wait on false and perjured man, on light,
Ungrateful woman; blessings such as Heaven
Garners in thunder-clouds, or comets bring
To the astonied nations—War and death,
Famine and pestilence, hate, fiercest hate,
And bitter, bitter love. Think not I grieve
To lose thy state or thee—misdeem not, Prince,
The sister of Castille. Look on this ring,
Pledge of our destined union; see, I rend
The gold apart, a broken, worthless toy,
As brittle as thy faith.

PED. Madam !—Yet sooth
She hath some cause for anger—Royal lady,
Men view admiringly the stately cedar,
Yet pluck the rose beside it.

D'AG. For yon minion—

ALPH. Remove the woman, guards. Princess, thy wrongs
Shall be avenged. Must I speak twice? Remove
The woman.

PED. Sooner—

INEZ. Nay, submit, submit,
Beseech thee, love, submit. It is thy King,
Thy father.

PED. Fear not, Inez. Ye must win her
At the sword-point. She is my wife—

MAN. And therefore
Arraigned of treason. Thine own act hath placed
The lady in this peril.

PED. Fiend accurst !
But I'll defend her yet. Come on who dares !

ALPH. Disarm him. Seize her.

INEZ. Yet a moment pause,
Brave Sir, for charity. Dost love me, Pedro ?
Dost love the poor, despised, defenceless woman,
Who hath bartered country, kindred, friends and home
For thee, only for thee ? I know thou dost.
Thou wouldst not have her die of grief and fear
Here at thy feet, nor fling the stain of blood
On her white raiment, or the curse of blood
Upon her head. What should we dread, my husband ?
Shall I not be a prisoner in the ward
Of a brave soldier ? Trust me, love, my heart
Beats lightly, hopefully.

PED. They'll part us, Inez ;
They'll part us. Go not, sweet.

INEZ. Man cannot part
Whom Heaven hath joined together.

PED. Go not, sweet;
I cannot trust them. Yet—Mark, Don Alvarez,
Look to thy prisoner; guard her as thy life;
If but a hair be touched of her fair head,
My fierce revenge would shame the lioness
When plundered of her young. Look to her, friend,
For love and charity.

ALPH. To prison, Sirs!

PED. Farewell! farewell!

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Hall of Justice in the King's Palace.

ALPHONSO, ANTONIO *and other Councillors arranged as for a Trial. Secretaries, &c., in attendance.*

ALPH. Call forth the prisoner. Lords, for no slight purpose
Have I convened the Council of the State
In grave and full assemblage.

Enter INEZ, *guarded by* ALVAREZ, *&c.*

Brief is the tale and sad. An old wise law,
Framed by a rightful King, my ancestor,
Whose reign was vexed by fierce, conflicting jars,
Decrees that she who, being a subject born,
Dare wed a Prince of Portugal, shall die
For that bold treason. A stern, awful law!
Unbloody yet, for till this fatal hour
None hath defied the deadly penalty.
There stands the first, the last. Inez de Castro,
Come forth! Cast off that shrouding veil! Disclose

Thy baleful beauty! There she stands whom Pedro
Claims for his wife, and claiming dooms to die.
It lies not in my office, lords, to judge
Her crime—fair, gentle wretch! Enough for me
To ratify your sentence.

Enter MANUEL.

Now, Don Manuel,
Hast thou discovered these same witnesses
That Pedro spake of?

MAN. Sire, with honest gladness,
I answer there be none.

ALPH. How say'st thou?
None?

MAN. The story of these bridals is a feint
Even as I said, my liege—a feint of love!
St. Vincent's priests, I have seen and questioned them,
Deny the deed. Anselmo, with the Nuncio,
Came and departed, an Italian monk,
A Florentine; five weeks agone they left
Our shores, and he by this is safe at Rome,
Or home at Florence, wandering on mission,
Or pent within his cell: ye might as soon
Recall the last year's clouds as Father Anselm.
Whilst Monica Manrique, the sole witness
Of these alleged espousals, the good nurse
Of the fair Lady Inez, died last night.

INEZ. Alas! alas! poor Monica!

ALPH. Without
Confession?

MAN. Unconfessed, unquestioned, Sire.
Already wasted with long malady,
The venerable woman, when she heard
The tale of yesternight, sank down and died.

INEZ. Oh, I am fatal still to all I love!
To all who love me! My poor good old nurse,
That never met me but with tender smiles;
That never spake to me but words of cheer,
Sweet, gentle, hopeful words! And she is dead,
My good old nurse! Dead of a broken heart!
My lords, I pray ye pardon my fond tears,—
There's none left now to weep for me. Poor Monica!

MAN. She is at rest.

INEZ. Ay, better so than live
To hear, to speak, to tell that fatal story!
Heaven in its mercy took thee, Monica,
From that strong agony! Sirs, I am ready.

MAN. An' please you, lords, St. Vincent's priests denying
These nuptials, the monk gone, the woman dead,
What rests but ye declare the tale a frand,
A mockery, a legend, framed to serve
A lover's reckless purpose? What remains
But to the safe charge of Count D'Aguilar,
That noble Spaniard, or the holy keeping
Of the good Abbess of the Ursulines,
The lady be dismissed.

ANT. In sooth, Don Manuel,
The charge lacks evidence. Have ye no witness?

MAN. None.

INEZ. Hold awhile. Say, were this union proved,
Stands Pedro's life in peril.

ANT. Lady, no.

INEZ. None, save mine own?

ANT. Not one.

INEZ. Then hear me, lords,
Hear me, great King, whilst by all sacred things,
By all that's holiest held on earth, in heaven,
By man's true faith, by woman's chastity,

BAYERISCHE STAATS-BIBLIOTHEK MUENCHEN

By virgin martyrs, and bright, spotless saints,
I swear that I'm Don Pedro's wife.

MAN. Recall
Thy desperate words. Oh, lady! wherefore fling
Thy life away?

INEZ. Didst think that Inez weighed
Life against honour? or would outrage truth,
Stern, lofty, bold, uncompromising truth,
Even by silence? Go to, Sirs, your doom!
Be speedy.

ALPH. (*Aside.*) A brave woman!

INEZ. Would ye know
If ye may believe me? Question Lady Constance,
Seek of Count d'Aguilar, and they will tell ye,
That Inez in her native Spain was known
A frank and virtuous maiden, loathing falsehood
As the brave loathe cowardice. Never, till love
And wifely duty held me in their bonds,
Bent I my nature to conceal a thought,
A feeling. I'm his wife! Mistrust me not
Albeit the state I claim be princely. Death
Walks at my side, my royal robe a shroud,
My canopy a coffin.

ALPH. *(Aside.)* A brave woman!
Yet are we pledged to Constance. *(Aloud.)* Good my lords,
She hath avowed enow. Pass to the doom.

PED. *(Without.)* Make instant way! Who dares oppose
me?

ALPH. Who,
With clamorous outcry, breaks upon our grave
And secret council?

Enter PEDRO.

PED. Inez!

ALPH. Don Alvarez,

Gave we not order that thy men-at-arms
Should line the entrance?
PED. Did ye think with word
Or weapon to stay me? Ye might as soon
Turn back the Tagus to its source, or check,
With threats and blows, the ocean's flowing tide,
As bar me from my Inez. Yon weak guard!—
Why, had ye gates of steel, garrisons, armies,
Such as defend huge cities, I had won
Through all. Who may dare stop me? Is not this
The Palace of the King, and I his son?
Is not the Council met in full assemblage,
And I chief councillor? My place hath been
On the right hand of the throne, but now 'tis here.
Inez!—Proceed, my lords, I am your prisoner,
Partaker of the crime, and fixed to share
The punishment.—Inez, thy hand is cold;
Thou tremblest.
INEZ. Only now. Think not thy wife
Could tremble with base dread of man's brief power.
I had steeled my heart 'gainst harshness and reproach,
But not against thy pitying tenderness.
My Pedro, I have borne for thee all ills
That suffering woman may endure—grief, fear,
Suspicion, hatred, scorn; but thy true love
O'erpays them all. A short and troubled way
We have trod together. Here we part. Thy path
Leads, a broad sunny track, through fields of fame
To palaces and thrones, a kindling track
Of glory; mine a narrow, dark descent
To the lone house of rest, the silent grave.
Pr'ythee, begone!
ALPH. I counsel thee, retire—
Out of a fatherly love, I warn thee, Prince,

Retire.

PED. Here is my place.

ALPH. Arm thyself, then,
With stern endurance. Let not yon fair creature
Shame thee by her high constancy. Grave judges—

PED. Oh, mockery of words!—Nay, nay, proceed!
I cry you mercy! I'll be patient!

ALPH. Sir,
'Twere wiser. We sit here the instruments
And ministers of a time-hallowed law,
And heed no more a young man's furious speech,
Than doth yon citadel the angry north
That raves round its old buttresses. My lords,
Have ye prepared your sentence?

PED. What! already?
Without a trial? without a proof? without
A witness? Ye are murderers, Sirs, not judges.

INEZ. They had a Prince's word. Thou call'dst me wife,
My husband, my dear husband! And I—Chide not
That she whom thou hast loved, loves better pure
And spotless death than stained and sullied life,
I was the willing witness of my crime,
And willingly abide the penalty.

PED. If crime there be, I am the only guilty.
I saw and loved this fairest, loveliest;
I wooed—what coil of wooing ere I won
The coy, shy maid to listen to my tale!
What vows, and threats, and pleadings, and fond oaths
Ere she would own her love! Even to the altar
I bore, half-fainting, my scarce conscious bride.
She knew not your stern law. The carrier dove
That, following her nature's holy instinct,
Bears treasonous missives underneath her wing,
Is not more innocent of ill than Inez.

I am the only guilty, Pass your doom
On me.

ALPH. Again I warn thee, son, retire.
Is't death?

MAN. Alas!

PED. Death! I to die? The Prince?
Pedro of Portugal?

ANT. Not so.

PED. Bethink ye
'Twere safer. Leave me living, and slay her!
Me, the avenger! Have ye children playing
Around your household hearths—fair girls, brave boys?
Have ye chaste wives? And dread ye not the vengeance
That I shall take for mine?

MAN. Alas! the law
Hath been defied, must be obeyed.

PED. And thou, too,
Thou that didst feign to love!

MAN. That would have saved,
That still may rescue her; so thou—

PED. Off with thee,
False flattering fiend! Father, thou wilt not sign
Yon bloody sentence? Stern although thou be,
Thou wilt not sign that sentence?

INEZ. Listen, Pedro,
To my last parting words.

PED. Talk not of parting—
The thought brings frenzy!

INEZ. Thou wilt never hear
My voice again, dear husband. Listen now,
And grant the first boon Inez ever craved
Of Pedro, the first boon, the last. Be patient,
Be gentle in thy grief, for thou wilt grieve—
I know thou wilt—but meekly, peacefully.

Defile not honest love with black revenge;
Quell thy wild anger; fight against despair
As 'gainst a foe in arms; live for thy country;
So shall men say 'twas no ignoble woman
Who woke that hallowed passion. Now farewell!
I'll spare thee, Sire, the utterance of my doom:
'Tis death.

PED. Oh, never! never!

INEZ. Death! and when?

PED. Oh, father, hold thy hand! He hath signed.

ALPH. Don Manuel,
Break up the council. Lead the prisoner forth.
At seven to-morrow.

[*Exeunt* INEZ, *guarded*, MANUEL, ANTONIO, ALVAREZ, *&c.*; ALPHONSO *is going, but is called back by* PEDRO, *and the King and Prince only remain on the Stage.*

PED. Father! Go not, father!
Return! return! I'd speak with thee.

ALPH. What wouldst thou?
The council is dismissed; the sitting o'er;
The mighty business closed.

PED. Ay, like the grave,
The dark, deep, silent grave. Sir, I would change
A few calm words with thee—Fear not my rashness—
Words that may suit the time; sad as a dirge,
Slow as a knell, brief as a tombstone; calm
And reverend words.

ALPH. Well, well, I'll stay with thee.
Yet wherefore—

PED. Wherefore! Dost thou ask? the doom
Still trembling on thy lips; the ink still wet
On that accursèd and accursing scroll,
Which sends yon martyred innocent to share
The death of traitors. But she shall not die!

My Inez shall not die! Dost hear me, father?
She shall not die! She shall not die!

ALPH. Alas!

The doom must be fulfilled. But I will hear thee;
Will stay beside thee in thy grief; will bear
My part in this great misery. Thou wouldst speak with me—
I had rather listen to thy wildest words
Than see thee sobbing there in mute despair.
Speak, my dear son.

PED. Inez! Release her! pardon her!
Inez!

ALPH. The fiat hath gone forth; but if in aught
Beside my power can stead thee—

PED. The wide world
Hath nought for me but Inez. Thou art a King,
And Kings can pardon. Thou art a man, and men
Are merciful. Save her! By thine old love,
If ever thou didst love me, father, save her!

ALPH. If I did love thee! Why, from the first hour
When thy fair mother placed thee in my arms,
With such a gush of joy, thou hast been my hope,
My pride, my idol. If I loved thee! Pedro,
How often in thy tender infancy,
Have I stolen to thy couch, sleepless myself
Till I had blest my sleeping boy! How oft
Watched thee in sickness; fondled thee in health;
Laid by my state to be thy playmate; cast
The careful thoughts of busy man aside
To share thy childish pastimes; trimmed thine arrows;
Shot at the mark with thee, rode at the ring,
Veiling my strength and skill to a slim stripling,
Triumphing in his triumphs!—If I loved thee!—
And now, at first sight of a baby face
And a trim shapely form, that careful love

Of twenty years is swept as lightly off
As a dead leaf in autumn.

PED. Father!

ALPH. An' thou have heirs,
And dote as I have done, look thou to find
Like gratitude. The care of twenty years
Flung by for a slight girl! Take heed thou pray not
For sons; they'll prove avengers.

PED. Father! father!
Hast thou ne'er loved? My mother—

ALPH. Was a Princess,
The daughter of a King. The very sound
Should thrill thee like a trumpet-blast, a call
To duty and to honour! We are Princes
Born to inherit thrones, to fill a page,
Ay, and a proud one, in that book of Fame,
History, to outlast the palaces we build,
The tongue we speak, to lend an age its name,
A realm its glory. Pedro, thou wast once
Ambitious. Is the noble fire extinct
Within thy breast? or lies it smouldering there,
Till some bold breath shall fan it into flame?
Thine was a soaring spirit. Listen, Pedro,
And thou shalt have the fame thou covetedst
With an immoderate lust, in such a heaped
And piled abundance, that great Ammon's son
Had cried "Enough!"

PED. Once like a trumpet call
Thy voice had stirred me. I am a woman now
With grieving. One thought burns within my breast,
One only.

ALPH. Hearken! Wed Castille's fair sister;
Lead our commingled power before Granada;
Defy the Moor; conquer the unconquered seat

Of his proud reign, the bright Alhambra; chase
The Infidel from Christendom, and win
A name at which the glories of the Cid
Shall fade, as a star before the sun. Go to,
Art thou a soldier and a knight, and fires not
Thy blood at this brave vision?

PED. Give me Inez,
And with our own bold Portugals I'll drive
Spaniard and Moor before me, like the deer
Before the hunter.

ALPH. Sir, thy hand is pledged
To Constance.

PED. Inez is my wife, my true
And faithful wife; betrayed by my rash love
To misery unspeakable; a prisoner
A sad, forlorn, and desolate prisoner, doomed
To swift and bloody death. Now, by St. Michael!
He were no knight that could forsake a woman
Whom he had brought into such perilous strait.

ALPH. Thyself hast heard her sentence.

PED. Thou'lt not save her?

ALPH. I cannot.

PED. Say thou wilt not.

ALPH. Calm thee, son.
I pity thee, and therefore bear with thee,
But she must bide her doom. The King's high duty
Shall be fulfilled; howbeit, the Prince—

PED. Away
With that vain word, which bars me from the right,
The common right and heritage of nature,
From human joys and human sympathies.
Off idle trappings! Now I am a man!
I own no title now but Inez' husband,
No gaud but my good sword. Come forth, bright weapon!

True men have said that I could wield thee well—
But none e'er saw me fight for her. Sweet wife,
If there be hearts and arms in Portugal,
I'll save thee yet.

ALPH. Be calmer.

PED Calmer! Preach
To the forked lightning, the fierce ocean-storm;
And when thou hast quelled them, then strive to tame
Me and my strong despair. Dost think to slay
Inez whilst Pedro lives? Seize, bind, enchain,
Imprison; lay me in deep dungeons, far
Below the lowest mark of ebbing tides,
Or cage me on the dizzy top of steep
And mountain fortresses, chain me to rocks,
Tie me upon wild horses, yet I'll burst
All bonds to rescue her! Ay, though the throne,
The palace, the thronged city, the whole nation
With its vast mass of quick and sentient life,
Friends, fellow-soldiers, kinsfolk, countrymen,
Should in the heaving throes of that wild earthquake
That great convulsion perish.

ALPH. She must die.
Thou shouldst have better known thy father, Pedro,
Than to try threats when prayers and tears had failed.
I fear thee not. For yonder prisoner, she
Must bide her doom.

PED. Tyrant! When next I come,
Tremble!

ALPH. She must abide her doom.

[*Exeunt separately.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Hall of Audience. The Throne in the Middle of the Stage; ALPHONSO *writing at a Table;* DON MANUEL *standing near him; Lords and Attendants in the Background;* ANTONIO, GARCIA, *and other Nobles in front.*

ANT. Hear ye aught farther, Lords, of these fierce tumults
That all night long have raged throughout the city?
GAR. Nought, save low-whispered rumour. Since the Princess
Fled here for refuge none hath passed the barred
And guarded gates.

Enter ALVAREZ.

ANT. Here comes one full of news,
To judge by his speed.
GAR. Ay, and of evil matter.
What tidings, Don Alvarez? Is the Prince
Advancing on the Palace?
ALV. With a course

Rapid and furious as the lava tide
Sweeping from far Vesuvius; turbulent
As our own Lisbon seas; angry and fierce
As winds in the Equinox. The King should hear—

ANT. He hath heard.

ALV. And still unmoved!

GAR. Do many follow
The fiery champion?

ALU. A fast-growing host,
Soldiers and citizens commingling, crowd
The narrow streets; even the slight beardless boys
And fearful women follow his thick ranks,
Mixing their shriller cries with the deep threats
Of armed warriors. The whole city rings
With "Inez! Lady Inez!"

MAN. (*Apart.*) A brave war-word!

ALV. All the night long hath he with that name stirred
The slumbering people; and as the dread hour
When she must die draws near, with wildest threats
Invests our walls.

MAN. Hold the guard firm?

ALV. As yet.

ALPH. (*To an Attendant.*) Despatch the messenger to
Rome, good Carlos,
Without delay: there be his missives.—Manuel,
Haste to the citadel. Thou know'st thine errand.

[*Exit* MANUEL.

GAR. (*To* ANTONIO.) Is Inez prisoner there?

ANT. If still she live,
She is.

ALPH. (*Advancing.*) Now, gentles, know ye if the rebels
Be near the Palace?

ALV. Good my liege, they close
Around the walls.

ALPH. Dismiss the guards. Fling wide
The iron gates. I'll front them singly here
Before the insulted throne.

ALV. Nay, nay, beseech thee
Deprive not of their proudest privilege
Your faithful soldiers, Sire.

ANT. Nor trust too far
The fierce tumultuous crowd, who passion-driven
Rush maddening through the streets, like furious bulls,
Blinded and stumbling with their own brute rage.
Such herds are dangerous.

ALPH. Dismiss the soldiers;
Fling wide the palace-gates. The herd ye speak of
Will own their master. Wouldst thou have a King—
I'll proudly say a just one—quail before
His subjects? Fling the barriers wide!

Enter CONSTANCE *and Ladies.*

CON. They come!
They crowd the courts! The vestibule, the hall,
Are filled with the fierce people.

ALPH. Tremble not:
Degenerate though he be, thou art as safe
As in thine own Castillian home. Be sure
That ye are safe.

Enter PEDRO, *followed by Soldiers and Citizens. The King stands before the Throne;* CONSTANCE *and her Ladies beside and behind him, whilst the Nobles and Courtiers, close before him in front.*

PED. Inez! Disperse yourselves
Throughout the Palace. Line the courts. Let none
Escape unquestioned. Inez! Here we parted.
This was her prison. Waste no moment, friends!

The dial points the hour. The bell hath rung.
Release her, or she dies.

[*Perceiving* ALVAREZ, *and seizing him.*

Ha! Art thou there?
My wife! my wife! I trusted her to thee
As to a noble soldier in all honour.

ALV. And in all honour was she dealt withal;
But yesternight an order from the Council
Removed the lady from my ward.

PED. To death?
If thou be slain, streets, churches, palaces
Shall light thy funeral, Inez! Fire the city!
Make Lisbon one black ruin! Portugal
One mighty grave!

ALV. Be calmer, Prince. They bore
The lady to the Citadel, a prisoner,
But not to death.

PED. On to the castle! on!
He who first scales the walls, with this good sword,
I'll dub him knight. On! on!

ALPH. (*Advancing.*) A brave emprise!
A tempting guerdon! Yet if still she live,
And but one man-at-arms approach the fortress,
The headsman knows his signal.

FIRST CIT. 'Tis the King.
Seize him!

ALPH. (*To the Nobles.*) Stir not a step; draw not a sword.
I'll waste no life in my defence, nor spill
One drop of blood, save that the rebels seek,
Save mine.

SEC. CIT. Surround him! Fell him to the earth!

PED. (*Striking him down.*) Down to the dust thyself, vile caitiff! What,
Afore my very eyes lay thy foul hands

On the King's sacred person! on my father!
I have but stunned the reptile! Drag him hence!
Look ye keep reverent distance, Sirs! Stand back!
By Heaven! he dies upon my sword who dares
Advance a step unordered. Back, I say!
Stand from about us!—Father!

ALPH. I abjure
For ever that fond title. Sir, my son
Was the main pillar of the throne, the stay
Of state and people, a thrice loyal knight,
Who led his country's armies, conqueror,
In twenty battles. Even Kings have vailed
Their crowns to my brave son. Thou art a rebel—
Doth the word stir thee?—chief of rebels, leader
Of the foul city's foulest crew, the spawn
Of crowded suburbs and rank lazar-houses.
Them hast thou led—chivalrous deed!—to storm
The King's defenceless palace, to make prisoner
The undefended King, that thou might'st climb
The vacant throne, and seat thee there, usurping
The crown thou shouldst inherit. Sir, my son
Was a frank, loyal knight, who would have spurned
Treason and traitor. Wherefore pause? Come on,
And drink thy monarch's blood. Dost fear to meet
My single arm? There lies my sword. My breast
Is open to thy weapon. Strike, I say!
Why dost thou falter? Strike! Strike! Strike! Thou
hast given
A sharper pang already.

PED. Take thy sword;
Take mine. Heaven shield thine honoured life! Live!
Reign!
But spare my Inez!

ALPH. Sir, I hold no parley

With rebels.

PED. Only tell me that she lives,
That Inez lives. There is a burning fire
Here in my brain. If thou wouldst rescue me
From crime and frenzy, say she lives.

ALPH. Dismiss
Thy followers! Clear the Palace! Cast thyself
On the King's mercy!

PED. (*To the People.*) Quick, disband the troops;
Disperse the citizens! Away! Away!

[*Exeunt Citizens, Soldiers, &c.*

Now, father! Now!

ALPH. Don Pedro—

PED. Call me son!
Call me thy son!

ALPH. My son!

PED. And oh, forgive
My sinful rashness, father! I ne'er dreamt
Of thrones, or crowns, or sceptres, gilded toys
That mad ambition plays withal. My thought
Was but of Inez. Doth she live?

ALPH. She lives.

PED. Joy! joy! Thou hast ta'en a weight as of the world
From off my heart. Now I can breathe. The fear
The stifling, deadening, suffocating fear
That held my sense in thrall is gone. She lives!
And thou hast given thy son a second life
And dearer. Inez lives! The hour is past,
And Inez lives! And she shall live! Say that!
Say thou hast pardoned her!

ALPH. I pardon thee.

PED. And her!

ALPH. I pardon thee.

PED. Oh, father! father!

But I can die with her. Will none plead for me?
Have I no friend amidst the courtly train
To aid by one poor prayer? Rude as I seem,
Rough and unnurtured, not a man of ye
Ever craved grace or guerdon, but I straight
Became his bondsman, braving for his sake
Angry rebuke and cold rebuff, nor slackening
My honest service till his suit were won.
And now I sue for life, for more than life,
And ye stand mute!

CON. Alphonso, pardon her!

PED. The Lady Constance!

CON. Pardon her, Alphonso,
Even for my sake.

ALPH. Dost thou plead for them, Princess?

PED. Ay, blessings on her gentle heart! If Pity
Were lost on earth, she would be found enshrined
In woman's generous breast.

ALPH. Thou, too, sweet lady!

CON. A kindly pardon glistens in thine eye
And trembles in thy voice. Thou hast heard my prayer:
Hear now my thanks; and speed me quickly home,
That I the first may pour in Philip's ear
This story of true love. If still his Constance
Be dear to her dear brother, trust me, Princes,
Castille shall take on ye a royal vengeance
In firmer peace and closer amity.
Farewell to all!

PED. Oh, noblest maid!

CON. Farewell!

[*Exit* CONSTANCE *with her Ladies.*

PED. Oh, sweet and noble maid! But Inez! Inez!

ALPH. Afore thy mad revolt, we had sent to stay
The execution, and dispatched Don Manuel

To proffer terms which now—
PED. Is she not pardoned?
Manuel, I have small faith in that smooth courtier.
ALPH. Listen, Don Pedro. Yonder royal maid
Hath read us a brave lesson. We have both
Done grievous wrong to thy fair wife. Thyself
By thy rash bridals, I—But we will make
A glorious reparation. Good Antonio,
Haste to the jewel-room. The very crown
Thy mother wore shall deck her brow! Convey
The rich regalia of the Queen, Antonio,
Straight to the Citadel, with fitting pomp
Of officer and prelate. She who entered
A captive and condemned, she shall come forth
A crowned Princess.
PED. Father! Canst thou ever
Forgive me, father?
ALPH. Can I!—Meet us quickly
At the Citadel, Antonio. My dear son! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Prison.

INEZ, *alone.*

INEZ. Surely the hour is past! How wearily
Lags this long, lonely pause! No friend to cheer,
No priest to pray for me, and he my husband—
I have dearly purchased the blest right to call thee
By that fond name, my Pedro!—he—I dare not
Think of his fierce, unmitigated woe.
Alas! they might have granted one farewell—
The last! Well! well! once in her quiet grave,
And they'll forgive poor Inez! Now—Don Manuel!

Enter MANUEL.

So! Art thou come to lead me to the death?
Say Yes, and for the first time win of me
A free and joyous welcome.

MAN. Lovely lady,
I come to bring thee life.

INEZ. Life!—to live on
With him and for him! Life and life's best joy—
Pure wedded love! Oh, Heaven is merciful,
Refusing our fond, peevish prayers! I asked
For death—but life with him! Oh, we shall be
Too happy! Wherefore flew he not to share
Mine ecstasy? How bent he to his will,
His kingly father? What detains my Prince?
Why comes he not himself? Alas! forgive me
These my ungrateful questionings. Thanks! thanks!
Thou art a wise man, Manuel, and the wise
Are ever good. Thanks, generous friend, high thanks
For thy blest tidings! Wherefore start'st thou?

MAN. Inez,
I come to proffer life; but not—nay listen—
Hear out mine errand, lady, and then speak.
I bring thee life. Alphonso hath dispatched
A messenger to sue the Holy Pontiff
That he dissolve these rash, unlawful bridals;
And thou consenting, as thy stiffest denial
Were vain, to this divorce—I pr'ythee, hearken!—
And wedding with another—

INEZ. Man, begone!
I am Don Pedro's wife. Go read my title
In the stern scroll that doomed me to the block
For that inexpiable crime, the sentence
That shall descend, enrolled amongst thy archives,

Imperishable record of my fame,
My honour's bloody guardian. Wherefore loiters
The headsman? Wherefore art thou here to vex
My parting spirit?

MAN. Sweet, I come to save thee.

INEZ. Thou cam'st to proffer choice of life or death,
And I have chosen. Lead to the block.

MAN. I'll shake
This stubborn calmness yet.

INEZ. Thou canst not, Sir;
It is the calm of virtue.

MAN. A fair word
That virtue! Yet in this bad world of ours,
How many passions, sins, and miseries,
Lurk underneath its honest seeming. Virtue!
Why 'tis the very cloak Ambition wears—
The mask Rebellion dons. What if more lives
Than thine hang on thy choice?

INEZ. Whose life? his? his?
My Pedro's? No! no! no! Thou art a cunning
And merciless fiend, sent here afore my death
To tempt and torture my frail, sinful soul
With thoughts that burn like purgatorial fires.
Heaven pardon my impatience! There's none other
In peril, none in jeopardy of death,
Save her who prays for death to end her woes.

MAN. Didst sleep last night?

INEZ. No; for I thought of him,
And of his bitter grief. Lead to the block
For his dear sake. When Hope is dead, pale Fear
Fills the same monument.

MAN. Didst thou not hear
Noises around thy prison?

INEZ. Ha!

MAN. Strange noises:
Knolling of bells, and clattering of arms,
And trampling of mailed steeds, and shouts of men?
INEZ. Say that I did, and what of that? He's safe!
MAN. As safe as one who leads a rebel force
Against a monarch's power.
INEZ. In rebellion
For me! for me!—Oh! no, no, no! 'Tis false!
A traitor to his King!—Why rend my heart
With these wild thoughts? Confess thy falsehood, Manuel!
In arms against his father!
MAN. Ay, to arm
Father 'gainst son, son against father, subjects
'Gainst their anointed King; to raise a war—
A desperate civil war; to fire a nation,
This is rare virtue! Why that fairest piece
Of heathen wantonness, the beauteous Helen,
In that old ten years' siege, hatched not the mischief
Virtue and thou have wrought in one short hour.
INEZ. Oh, woe is me that ever I was born!
He in rebellion, slain in arms, a rebel
Against his father-King, fallen, vanquished, laid
In an unhonoured grave,—or conqueror,
Murderer, parricide, cursing her name
Who plunged him in that gulph of sin! Alas,
That ever I was born!
MAN. Take comfort, sweet one;
It stands within thy power to end this strife,
And with a word.
INEZ. How? where? Show me but how,
And I will worship thee.
MAN. Be mine.
INEZ. No, no;

I am his wife.

MAN. Thou dost refuse? [*Going.*

INEZ. Man, man,
What ill hath the poor Inez done to thee,
That thou shouldst wring her very soul? In mercy
Say can I end these wars? Can I save him?

MAN. Only as I have said. These fatal nuptials
Be the thrice fatal cause, and that removed—

INEZ. Ay, ay, I am the cause. Remove that cause,
And then there will be peace.

MAN. And bliss.

INEZ. Ay, bliss
In heaven.

MAN. After long bliss on earth.

INEZ. In heaven—
That is the blessedest place. The peace-maker
Will go there. That way's sure. Remove the cause—
The fatal cause!—On, on, Don Manuel. Show me
To stay the strife.

MAN. Do but consent, sweet lady,
To this divorce; and when for ever parted—

INEZ. For ever!

MAN. Then in a fresh bridal seek
A lowlier bliss.

INEZ. A lowlier bridal bed!
It must be, and it shall be. Manuel, hasten
To end these woes. Pray them forgive me, Manuel,
Me, the unhappy cause of this great woe.
Pray them forgive poor Inez! Tell Don Pedro
That in my love I never was ambitious;
I thought not of the crown; 'twas he, 'twas he
That was mine idol! Bear him back his gifts;
These pearls of Ind; he tied them round my neck

At twilight, in the Cintra orange-grove,
Where he first spake of love. Oh, wretched love!
Oh, miserable hour! This ruby ring
At midnight, in St. Vincent's lonely church,
He on my trembling finger fondly prest,
Sole token of that fatal union! Take it,
And pray that it be buried in my grave.
And this small Moorish attaghan, his first
And dearest gift, the jewelled attaghan,
Which, half in sport, and half in manly scorn
Of the effeminate gaud, he bade me wear
A woman's fitting weapon, say I bore it
Next to my heart, so that the faithful steel
Glowed with each hope and trembled with each fear,
Like a true friend. Oh, precious gift of love!
Say it shall wed me to my second bridegroom—
Death! death! [*Stabs herself.*

MAN. Hold thy rash hand! Live, Inez, live!
She's dead! And I—oh, blindest wretch, that read not
Her desperate purpose—

PED. (*Behind.*) Inez!

MAN. 'Tis Don Pedro.
My bitter cup hath yet one sweetening drop—
Revenge.

PED. Mine Inez! Give her to my arms!
That yearn for their sweet burthen. Touch her not,
She is my wife.

MAN. Take her.

PED. She falls! she bleeds!
Inez! She hears me not. Her pulse is still.
She's dead! She's slain! Cowardly murderer!

MAN. Prince! was that dagger mine?

PED. Oh, torturing fiend!
Thou shalt abide this deed.

[*Enter* ALPHONSO, *followed by a Grand Procession of Nobles, Priests, Guards, &c., bearing the Crown and Sceptre, Censers, &c.*

Father, look on her!
Look where she lies, love's martyr. She is slain,
And we are murderers, father! Mine own Inez!
My love! my wife! my Queen! The crown! the crown!
The glittering diadem! O blessed Shade,
Look down! Lo, where I crown thee, Death's pale bride
And mine. Lo, where I place the cold stiff sceptre
In thy cold stiffening hand. Lo, where I drop
The holy oil on the wan brow that bears
A majesty above this earth. My Queen!
Mine only Queen! Oh, never living love
Shall part our union, Inez! With this kiss
Do I re-wed thee! With this kiss devote
My life to thy dear memory. Do homage!
Viper, do homage! Father, bless thy daughter!
And pray for thy poor son! Pray for thy son!

GASTON DE BLONDEVILLE:

A ROMANTIC DRAMA.

In Three Acts.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Henry III., King of England.
Archbishop of York.
Earl of Huntingdon.
Gaston, Baron de Blondeville.
Prior of St. Mary's.
Hugh Woodreeve, a Merchant of Bristowe.
Albert, the Queen's Minstrel.
Pierce, the King's Jester.
Host of the Flaggon.
Benjamin, a Jew.
Gilbert, a Groom belonging to Gaston.
Geoffrey, his Page.
Marshal of the Lists.
Herald.
Spectre of Sir Reginald de Tolville.

Lords, Knights, Priests, Jews, Squires, Pages, Yeomen, Minstrels, &c.

Eleanor, Queen of England.
The Lady Isabel, Daughter of Lord Huntingdon.
The Lady Gertrude, her Cousin.
Alice, her Bower Woman.
Rose, *Cicely* } *Daughters of Mine Host of the Flaggon.*

Ladies, Attendants, Flower Girls, &c.

Scene in or near the Royal Palace and Castle of Kenilworth, in the reign of Henry III. Time of action, two days.

GASTON DE BLONDEVILLE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Common Room of a Village Hostel, large and low, with many angles, old-fashioned Doors and Windows, a wide Hearth, long Tables, high-backed Chairs, and oaken Settles.

MINE HOST, ROSE, *and* CICELY *in front;* BENJAMIN *and two other Jews at a Table in the Background;* HUGH WOODREEVE *nearer the Front, at first lost in Thought, afterwards attending to the Discourse.*

HOST. (*With a Jug in his Hand.*) Come, Cicely, bestir thyself. Rose, where art thou? Be nimble, girls! Have ye forgot that the King is come to Kenilworth, and that the grand bridal of the Baron de Blondeville hath place to-day? The hostel will be all alive with gallants; yeomen and pages from the Court—Have ye sack abroach?

ROSE. Yes, father!

HOST. Bailiffs and burgesses from Warwick—Look that ye tap the fattest ale—

CIC. Thou art the best judge of that, father.

HOST. Ah, jade! Rose, see to the Jews' breakfast. And now that thou talkest of ale, Cicely, fetch me another jug—

Enter PIERCE.

And here in good time comes Master Pierce, the King's Jester, to help me drink it! Morrow, Master Pierce.

PIERCE. Morrow, my jolly Host of the Flaggon. Thou flourishest, Mine Host, thou flourishest. Which is the bigger in the waist, I pr'ythee, thou or thy great ale butt? Marry, for the contents they, I warrant me, be pretty much the same. Ah, Mistress Rose! How goeth the miller's man of Horton? Eh? Doth that love hold still? When saw'st thou the Tanner of Warwick, Mistress Cicely? A blithe bridal to ye both, my maidens, and soon!

HOST. Turn not the heads of my wenches with your Court *quiddities*, Master Jester. Look ye, if Rose have not placed the gammon before the Jews. Get the chine of beef, girl.

PIERCE. Ay, the infidels eschew bacon. What make the unbelievers here?

HOST. Master Benjamin and his comrades? They come to pay monies; and were craving to be introduced to one about the King.

PIERCE. To pay monies! I'm their man.

HOST. Benjamin, this is Master Pierce—

PIERCE. The King's poor Fool, at thy service, Sir Jew. What wouldst thou at Court?

BEN. Thou know'st the fine imposed on such of our tribe as sojourn in England—

PIERCE. Ay, a right easy way of compounding for your mal-practices. Ye'll soon win it back in usance from some of our unthrift heirs. But ye have not kept your day. Ye were

asked for at Windsor. Nevertheless an' ye bring the red gold, ye may look to find grace. 'Twas eight thousand mark, as I take it?

BEN. Alack, good Sir! we come to crave remission of this grievous fine. And if thou wilt obtain a gracious hearing, or present this poor scroll—

PIERCE. Present scrolls instead of monies! proffer parchments for purses! rob the King's Exchequer! By our Lady, the knaves take me for a fool in good earnest! Back and fetch the gold.

BEN. By the Rod of Aaron, we have it not!

PIERCE. Tell that tale at Court, and look to feel the rod on thine own back.

BEN. By Moses and the Prophets—

PIERCE. Pshaw! Back and fetch the monies; or it needs no greater a prophet than myself to foretell that that withered neck of thine will be shortened by the axe, or stretched by the cord;—for the hangman's were the likelier end.

BEN. Alack! Alack!

CIC. Alas, for the poor Jews! Is there none of power over our lord the King to win him to remit this fine?

PIERCE. In troth I know of none, fair Cicely.

ROSE. Would not Sir Gaston de Blondeville, think'st thou? He of whom men say that he saved the King's life in a boar-chase. Surely he would succeed.

PIERCE. Why, he might if he would—but he's wiser. However, my pretty Rose, thou hast made a shrewd guess; for this is his wedding-day, and if ever one may reckon upon a wise man's wits being set a wandering, that's the time. Try the Baron de Blondeville, Jews! and talk of delay or remission as ye find his brain more or less addled. Name not my name as ye hope to speed. But get these lasses to furnish ye with as much sack as ye can carry, to bribe the warders to let ye pass—and look ye drop no word to them

that ye bring no monies. Off with ye! Tarry not for thanks. (*Exeunt* ROSE, CICELY, BENJAMIN, *and Jews.*) Now, it were a sin in me, that am a good Christian, to pity these dog-Jews, who after all be little better than rank knaves!

HOST. Be sure of that, albeit good customers.

PIERCE. They are as Fear and Misery have made them. Well! The Baron de Blondeville is their best chance.

HOST. He holds his favour, then?

PIERCE. Most absolutely. Howbeit our English lords do look upon these Provençals with some suspicion, all voices agree in his praise. No knight in battle or in hall so famous or so fortunate as the bold and gallant Sir Gaston de Blondeville. He's to be married to-day to the fair Lady Isabel, the daughter and heir of the Lord Huntingdon. The King gives the bride, poor, pretty soul! the Queen graces the bridal, and all the cooks in Kenilworth have been busy since cock-crow with the banquet—and yet—

HOST. What meanest thou?

PIERCE. I? nought! nought! What a fool art thou to crave meaning of a Fool!—Hark ye! Who is that silent personage yonder, who hath been amusing himself this half-hour with his own thoughts and our discourses? Doth he belong to the dog-Jews?

HOST. 'Tis a good merchant of Bristowe. How farest thou this morning, Master Woodreeve?

WOOD. (*Advancing.*) Indifferently well.

PIERCE. (*Aside.*) Ha! This should be the same man that had well-nigh fainted last night at our Royal entrance into our goodly Palace at Kenilworth. (*Aloud.*) 'Twas an ugly fit of fear or of sickness, Master, that seized thee yestereve at sight of the good King.

WOOD. Not of the King! I came to see him; to crave a boon of his Grace—

PIERCE. Here's another man come to bring excuses instead of money!

WOOD. Or rather, to demand a right of his justice. It *was* a strange sickness; and even now, when I think upon the cause, it seems as if my senses had played me false. Thou wast present?

PIERE. Of a surety. Saw men ever so grand a procession and not a Fool?

WOOD. It seemed to me that there rode on the King's right hand a reverend prelate in rochet and stole?

PIERCE. My Lord of York. He did so.

WOOD. And on his left a bold and stalwart knight—methinks I see him now!—drest in a doublet of tawny-coloured satin and a cloak of purple velvet all frounced and broidered; his jewelled cap surmounted with snowy feathers, and his manèged steed unstained and spotless as his waving plume. Rode such a man as that on the left hand of the King?

PIERCE. Most surely.

WOOD. Then it was no dream.

HOST. Thou waxest as pale as thou wast last night. Wilt take a cup of wine?

WOOD. No.

PIERCE. Or of water?

WOOD. No! no!—Who was that knight?

PIERCE. The rider of the white steed? Who should he be, but the gallant Baron de Blondeville?

WOOD. The favourite of the King? The knight of whom thou spakest but now?

PIERCE. The same.

WOOD. And on his wedding-day! This is no child's task. But it must be undergone, and it shall. I should have known the face at Cairo. How may I see the King?

PIERCE. Why, I can get thee standing-room on the top of

the Archer's Tower, so that when the King passes from the Chapel—

WOOD. I must speak with him, and instantly! 'Tis matter of life and death.

PIERCE. Here's another remission of fine wanted. Look ye, friend, an' thou seekest to rob the Exchequer, that is to say, to pay the King's dues in words instead of money, thou must look elsewhere for a gentleman-usher.

WOOD. Money! This is matter of conscience, Jester! matter, as I said, of life and death. I must speak with King Henry. I ask of thee but to bring me where I may come to him, and then to leave me to my fate. The risk shall be all mine own.

PIERCE. Nay, nay, let me not lead thee into peril. That were an ill office. What is thy business?

WOOD. That which I will not tell thee. Thou hast a kindly heart, and shalt rest safe in thine ignorance. The struggle and the danger shall be mine own, all mine own. Good Host, an' I return not, here is wherewithal to pay thee. Question not, but farewell. Now, Sir Jester!

[*Exeunt* WOODREEVE *and* PIERCE.

HOST. A mad merchant! a mad fool! But the purse is of weight. Rose! Cicely! Where be ye, wenches? Another cup of ale! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Lady's Apartment in the Palace of Kenilworth, rich Gothic Architecture, and an Oriel Window, part of which is practicable. Old carved Table and Chairs.

ISABEL, *richly dressed, sitting listlessly near the Table;* ALICE *and two other Women attending.* GERTRUDE *enters to them.*

GER. Why, Isabel!—my sweet cousin Isabel! still unveiled and unjewelled as I left thee an hour agone! The bridal carcanet on the table, the bridal wreath on thy lap, and the string of Orient pearls unmatched in the Queen's regalia, the pearls of Ormuz, which Sir Gaston himself brought from the far Indian seas, lying unregarded on the floor. What ails thee, maiden? Hast thou forgotten that this is thy wedding-day?

ALICE. Nay, nay, I warrant her, she remembers it but too truly.

GER. Speak to me, Isabel. Alice, what ails thy lady?

ALICE. Sooth, fair Madam, I know not. All the morning long hath she sate in this guise, sad and cold, and silent and passive. But when after Barbara had braided her hair, and Margaret had donned her robe, I attempted to fix the bridal wreath on her head, and to tie the string of pearls, Sir Gaston's gifts, around her neck, the sweet soul, who never before was wroth with her poor bower-woman, plucked them from my hand, and flung them where thou seest.

GER. Strange!

ALICE. Oh, my Lady Gertrude! you have been away from the Queen's Court this month last past, and have seen nought of your cousin until ye met yestereve here in Kenil-

worth, or you would not be thus amazed at my poor lady's heaviness of spirit.

GER. How meanest thou?

ALICE. Ever since this marriage hath been afoot, the lady Isabel hath lost rest, colour, and happiness. Her food hath not nourished her, her sleep hath not refreshed her, her very temper is changed. She loveth him not.

GER. Nay, Alice, not love Gaston de Blondeville! the knight of knights! the gallant of gallants! the envied of all lords! the admired of all ladies! Not love the Baron de Blondeville!

ALICE. Be sure, lady, that I have told thee sooth.

GER. Then why not fling herself at the feet of the good Earl her father? Why not implore the intercession of our gracious mistress the Queen?

ALICE. She hath! she hath! Both listened and smiled, and soothed, and talked of maiden modesty and maiden fear.

GER. Ay, and it is a fearful change for a young maiden. Beshrew thee, Alice, for startling me so! Isabel! Rouse thee, dear cousin! The Queen sent me to summon thee to her presence. 'Tis almost the hour when the King himself is to escort Sir Gaston to her chamber to lead thee to the chapel—such an honour as hath rarely been rendered to any save a princess. Come. This silence is unseemly, Isabel. Thou wilt teach me to chide.

ALICE. She heeds thee not.

GER. Alice, hast thou told me all?

ALICE. Suppose she loved another?

GER. Ha!

ALICE. One of low degree?

GER. Nay— (*A harp is heard without.*) See, she stirs! 'Tis the Queen's favourite minstrel, the youth whom they call Albert, come to summon the bride. I heard her Grace give such command.

Is. Hark!

GER. How she leans out of the lattice!

Is. Hark!

Song, Without.

They bid me strike the harp once more,
My gayest song they bid me pour;
In pealing notes of minstrel pride,
They bid me hail Sir Gaston's bride.
Alas! alas! the nuptial strain
Faltering I try, and try in vain;
'Twas pleasant once to wake its spell—
But not for Lady Isabel.

GER. What means the harper, Alice? And thy lady!—look how she listens!

Is. Hark! I say.

Song, Without.

They bid me vaunt in lordly lay
Sir Gaston's mien and spirit gay,
His wide demesnes and lineage high,
And all his feats of chivalry.
Alas! alas! the knightly lay
In trembling murmurs dies away.
'Twere sweet the warrior's fame to tell—
But not to Lady Isabel.

GER. What means he, Alice? 'Tis a seemly youth, and Isabel hath a deep love of song; but surely—

Is. Peace! Can ye not be silent?

Song, Without.

They bid me blend in tenderest song
The lover's fears, unuttered long,

With the bold bridegroom's rapturous glee
And vows of endless constancy.
Alas! alas! my voice no more
Can tale of happy passion pour;
To love, to joy a long farewell—
Yet blessings on thee, Isabel!

Is. Albert! Albert! He's gone! he's gone! Oh, cousin!

GER. Not a word more! I know what thou wouldst say; and from the bottom of my heart I pity thee, dearest Isabel. But a maiden of high degree may not wed with a low-born churl.

Is. A low-born churl! His ancestry may be nobler, Lady Gertrude, than the vaunted line of Hastings! Churl! The whole Court knoweth that, howsoever some mystery may overshadow his birth, he hath still been held of gentle strain. Thyself hast heard the Queen, his mistress and thine, recount how she received him in childhood on the banks of the Durance from his dying mother; and although the lady expired before her tale was told, and Albert could not or would not complete the story, yet still—But wherefore talk I thus to thee, misproud, contemptuous maiden! Rather let me say there is a regality of mind and of spirit in that youth which needs neither wealth, nor lineage, nor title, nor name, to even him with the greatest, the inborn nobility of virtue and of genius! Never till now knew I that he loved me; and now—Leave me, Lady Gertrude!

GER. Never, Isabel, whilst thou art in sorrow. Forgive me that harsh word! Forgive me, I implore, thee, sweetest! and talk to me as thou wast wont. Now that thou knowest of his love, what hope hast thou to reward it?

Is. Alas! none. The hour is past. Thou needst not tell me, cousin, that my lord and father, and the King our

gracious master, and the Queen, our thrice gracious mistress, may not be dallied with. Nay, even Sir Gaston himself—albeit my very spirit loathes him—hath a claim on my hand. It is too late to gainsay him. Oh, Gertrude! Gertrude! that this emerald wreath were a May-day crown! and this string of pearls a garland of cowslips! and thy poor Isabel a village maid! Or rather that this silken robe were a shroud, and I bearing forth to my burial sooner than to this bridal!

GER. Come, dearest, come!

Is. Oh, Gertrude! Gertrude! my heart will break!

ALICE. Alas! poor lady.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A Court in the Interior of the Palace of Kenilworth. Splendid Gothic Architecture. On one side a rich Portal leading to the Queen's Lodgings; on the other the Gothic Archway of the Chapel.

Enter WOODREEVE *and* PIERCE.

PIERCE. Well! I have held faith with thee, mysterious though thou be. We have won to the inner court whilst yonder Jews be parleying at the drawbridge. These are the Queen's lodgings, there lies the chapel, and beyond lie the State apartments. Thou canst not fail to see the King. Heaven grant thou see him not once too often. I fear thee much!

WOOD. I thank thee, gentle Jester—from my inmost heart I thank thee for thy good service, and thy kindly fear. And now I pr'ythee leave me.

PIERCE. (*Going.*) Ay, 'twere best. (*Returning.*) Yet before I go, hearken to a few serious words from a poor Jester. If,

as I suspect, thy business touch in aught the Baron de Blondeville, return as thou camest. He's dangerous. Thou knowest not this Henry the Third of our's. 'Tis a good King, a good man, mild, kind and just, except where his favourites be concerned—minions who for the while sway him absolutely. This Gaston is a valiant knight and a crafty courtier. He saved his royal master's life abroad; he falls in with his humour at home; and all the saints in the calendar would never convince King Henry that the man had a fault. Take a Fool's advice for once: meddle not with De Blondeville. They come. Stay thou there. I'll fall in with the train.

Enter the KING, GASTON, *the* ARCHBISHOP, LORD HUNTINGDON, *and other Nobles, as crossing the Stage.* PIERCE *joins the Train.*

KING. Nay, De Blondeville, thou must be content to lead Queen Eleanor; the Lady Isabel's fair hand is mine for the next half-hour. After that—

PIERCE. After that I'll wager my bauble against your Highness's sceptre—desperate odds that—gaiety against care!—I'll wager this precious bit of wood that he hath enough of it.

KING. How now, Fool! Meanest thou that the lady will strike the good knight?

PIERCE. Not so. Speech is a woman's weapon. The Lady Isabel hath a sharp wit.

KING. The maid hath been noted for modesty.

PIERCE. That I deny not. A maid's tongue is a sheathed sword. Marry, an' husbands say true, a wife when she draws it, is apt to fling away the scabbard.

GAS. Out on thee, heretic! We are late. The bride awaits us. Delay not, I beseech your Highness.

HUNT. What man is this?

WOOD. Justice! Justice, my liege! I call for justice.

GAS. Pass on, thou stay'st the King.

ARCH. That word, Sir Gaston de Blondeville, should stay a King.

KING. What wouldst thou, friend?

WOOD. Justice! I come for justice!

KING. On whom?

WOOD. A robber and a murderer. Justice, King! Instant justice!

KING. Be calmer. Thou shalt have it. Know'st thou the man?

WOOD. I should have known him at the end of the world.

KING. Name him; and tell thy tale. We are in haste.

WOOD. I'll not detain your Highness. 'Tis now some six years back that passing—First let me crave that until my fearful story shall be ended none may depart this presence. I shall be brief.

HUNT. A strange boon!

KING. But one that shall be granted. Dost thou hear me, Gaston?

GAS. Nay, good my liege! for a tale of murder on a Christmas-Eve, with pious dames to cry Alack! and trembling maidens to cluster round the hearth, and children to shiver, and candles to burn blue, I were meet auditor. But now, with the midsummer sun above our heads, the priest in the chapel, the bride in the hall! Pshaw! Pshaw! Defer this legend, Sire, I beseech thee! 'Twere an ill omen on a wedding-day.

PIERCE. Ay, truly. Defer it, I counsel ye, my liege. On to the wedding. I'll marshal ye with my truncheon—Dame Folly's leading staff—which sooner or later all manner

of folk do follow. Wherefore lag ye, my merry men? Forget ye that there's a bridal toward?

KING. How now, Sir Jester! Chafe not, Gaston; our word is past. Thy tale, Master Merchant, and quickly.

WOOD. I should have known him on the sands of Araby!

KING. Thy tale, I say. But first thy name?

WOOD. Hugh Woodreeve, a merchant of Bristowe.

KING. Now to thy tale.

WOOD. Some six years since, my liege, journeying from the Baltic Seas through this forest of Arden, in company with another trader, and a certain knight, yclept Reginald de Tolville—One is departing!

KING. The lover to his mistress. Rest here, and listen, De Blondeville. Pursue thy tale.

WOOD. We were set upon at the close of evening by a party of armed men. My fellow-trader and myself, poorly weaponed, were speedily bound by the ruffians. But our spoil, albeit no slender booty, was but the induction to this tragedy. To slay the good knight was their main intent. He made noble battle and killed two outright; but the dastardly villains crowded around him, and hacked at him all together, like woodmen at the trunk of some mighty oak, until he was borne to the earth; and then the leader of the crew, the master-murderer, smote him to the heart with his own sword, which he had wrested from his hand,—ay, even that same sword, wherewith he is now tracing viewless images on the ground whereon we stand. Look!

KING. Man, art thou bestraught?

WOOD. Now he hath dropt it.

KING. He! Whom meanest thou?

WOOD. Him at thy right hand—Gaston de Blondeville.

KING. This is a frenzy—a frenzy, good my lords!

HUNT. Certes, the man is lunatic.

PIERCE. Mad as a March hare!

KING. Thus to impeach a knight of our household, one who is all truth, all nobleness, all valour! 'Tis a rank frenzy. Remove him.

PIERCE. Ay, thrust him forth from the castle.

WOOD. I am not mad. Be none of ye leech enow to feel how calmly the blood travels through my veins? Thou, my lord, art a right learned Churchman. Give me figures to calculate or tasks to con, sift me with questions, probe me through and through, do aught that ye will with me, so that ye hold me capable of proving this murder.

ARCH. Of a surety, my liege, this man's accusation hath more of shape and form than frenzy commonly puts on. For the good knight's sake, his story should be sifted.

GAS. Slay me rather! Thou art a Churchman, my Lord of York, a meek and holy Churchman, a forgiver of injuries, a submitter to wrongs, a wooer of reproach, and knowest but by name, if even by name, the glorious idol, Honour. Kill me, King Henry, but doubt me not.

KING. None thinks to doubt thee, Gaston.

ARCH. The name of a true knight may come out pure from a false charge; and still I say, my liege, this matter should be looked into.

GAS. Question, then, and spare not.

ARCH. How many might there be of this armed company?

WOOD. Some eight or ten.

KING. Saw ye their faces?

WOOD. They were masked.

GAS. Look ye now, priest!

WOOD. But in the death-struggle the leader's vizor fell; and I saw him—as plainly as I see him now.

KING. What was the hour?

WOOD. About the curfew;—the dusk of the autumn evening.

GAS. And he saw me!

PIERCE. There was a Jack-o'-lanthorn by the road-side. The man is mad! And ye are mad to listen to his story.—He's lost! He's lost!

WOOD. Peace, fool! One of my comrades had lighted a torch at an iron-smith's by the way, and by the glare of the flame beneath the forest trees, I saw the murderer's visage as clearly as under this noonday sun.

KING. Shouldst thou know that iron-smith, think'st thou?

WOOD. No. I saw him but for an instant's space.

KING. And at a still shorter glimpse on that same evening, six years agone, can swear to another man's visage, to the taking away of life and of honour. Fie! Fie!

WOOD. Sire, there be moments of intense existence in which nature seems at pause, and time prolonged;—moments in which man lives ages; when every faculty is doubled in keenness and in power, when every sense is quickened, and every object of sight or sound fixed, engraven, burnt in upon the memory and the heart. For years after this murder, I never shut my eyes but the image of the murderer, glaring in the torchlight, lived in them, and would not pass away. I swear to him, my liege, to his face, to his voice, to the chain of wrought gold which he plucked from the neck of the deceased, and now wears around his own, to the crescent-shaped sword wherewith he slew its valiant owner, and which now trembles in his unworthy hand.

GAS. Render thanks to the saints, and to thine own baseness, that thy vile blood staineth not its blade. My liege, yon man is triply perjured. The sword was my father's; he won it in the field of Ascalon. The chain I purchased in Flanders. And for Reginald de Tolville, he died fourteen

years agone at Joppa. The good knight was my near kinsman.

WOOD. Ha! that I knew not. He was my friend.

GAS. Wast thou not fourteen years back sojourning at Embrun in Normandy?

WOOD. I know not the place.

KING. Dally no longer, Sirs! Gaston, my word is pledged to make inquest into this matter. Bear with the accusation but till to-morrow, and it shalt be set at rest for ever. And thou, Woodreeve, look that thou be prepared to prove what thou hast alleged at the tenth hour of the morning; for if thou failest in thy proof—Hark thee, Woodreeve! Withdraw thy charge; and we will hold this discourse as some distemperature of the blood or of the brain. Withdraw the charge, I counsel thee.

PIERCE. Beseech thee, good Merchant!

WOOD. Peace! King Henry, I came to thee craving that thou wouldst sit in judgment on this murder, and I thank thee that thou hast granted my suit. The trial shall be undergone.

KING. At thy peril be it then; for if thou prove not what thou hast sworn, so surely shalt thou die.

WOOD. I know it. I knew it always. But I am innocent, and truth is mighty.

KING. Bear him to the western turret. Give him all help to summon his witnesses, but guard him safely. (*Exit* WOODREEVE, *guarded*.) And now call forth the minstrels and the bride-maidens. On to the chapel, good my lords! 'Tis thy bridal day. Hast thou forgot, De Blondeville?

HUNT. Nay, good my liege—

KING. Have I not said, my Lord of Huntingdon! Wouldst thou let the lie of a fool or a madman weigh with thee more than a feather which the wind tosses here and there, or a dead leaf, that a bird's weak wing brushes from a tree? My

life on Gaston's honour—the life he saved. Make no pause, my Lord of York; nor thou, Huntingdon; nor ye, nobles! On to the bridal!

GAS. Oh, my liege! for a thousand lives, that I might peril them all for thee!

KING. On, to the Lady Isabel!

PIERCE. Alas for yon poor merchant!

[*Exeunt Omnes into the Queen's Lodgings.*

[*During the four last speeches, Minstrels with harps and different instruments, and Girls with baskets of flowers enter, and arrange themselves on the Stage, and the moment the* KING, *&c., go out, the following Song begins, the Maidens falling into Procession, and strewing Flowers as it is sung.*

Forth the lovely bride ye bring;
Gayest flowers before her fling,
From your close-piled baskets spread,
Maidens of the fairy tread!
Fling them far and wide and high,
A rosy shower 'twixt earth and sky,
Strew about! strew about!
Dark-eyed pinks with fringes light,
Rich geraniums, rich and bright,
Strew about! strew about!
Larkspurs trim and poppies dyed,
And freaked carnations' bursting pride,
Strew about! strew about!
Flaunting pea and harebell blue,
And damask rose of deepest hue,
And whitest lilies, maidens, strew,
Strew about! strew about!

[*Whilst the preceding Stanza and that which follows are singing, the* KING *returns, leading the* LADY ISABEL,

GASTON *leading the* QUEEN, *followed by the* ARCHBISHOP, HUNTINGDON, PIERCE, GERTRUDE, *&c. They walk in Procession across the Stage and into the Porch leading to the Chapel, preceded and followed by Minstrels and Flower Girls; and the Procession and the Song end together.*

Forth the lovely bride ye bring;
Sweetest flowers around her fling,
Till clouds of blended odours fly
In eddying steams from earth to sky.
Strew the tender citron there,
The crushed magnolia, proud and rare,
  Strew about! strew about!
Orange blossoms newly dropt,
Chains from high acacia cropt,
  Strew about! strew about!
Pale musk roses, light and fine,
Cloves and stars of jessamine,
  Strew about! strew about!
Myrtle tops, all wet with dew,
Nipped where the leaflets sprout anew,
Fragrant bay-leaves, maidens, strew,
  Strew about! strew about!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

A Rich Gothic Chapel.—At the Back of the Stage, and near the High Altar, a Recess, or Fretted Shrine, in greater obscurity than the rest of the Chapel.

Enter the KING, *the* QUEEN, SIR GASTON, *the* ARCHBISHOP, LORD HUNTINGDON, PIERCE, ISABEL, GERTRUDE, ALICE, *Nobles, Ladies, Priests, Minstrels, Flower Girls, and Guards. The whole Stage nearly full.*

QUEEN. Isabel! Rest thee, dear maiden! Thou art cold and trembling. Hurry her not, I beseech your Grace.

KING. Dost thou not remember thine own bridal, Eleanor? 'Tis but such a fit of awe and bashfulness as thou wast shaken withal. The sooner these same solemn rites be ended the better. Then to jousting, and dancing, and feasting, to chase away sad thoughts. Come!

PIERCE. (*Aside.*) Feasting, forsooth! They'll force the ceremony down her throat like a dose of physic, and then give her a bit of sweetmeat to put the taste out of her mouth. Welladay! Welladay!

KING. What mutterest thou, sirrah?

PIERCE. Did your Grace never hear a musty old saying about marrying in haste?

GAS. This is no place for foolery. Sweetest Isabel, his Grace awaits thee.

[*The* KING *and* QUEEN, GASTON, ISABEL, HUNTINGDON, GERTRUDE, *and others advance to the High Altar, around which the* ARCHBISHOP *and several Priests are standing.*

ARCH. Who gives the bride?

PIERCE. Hark!

[*Solemn Music is heard from the Shrine.*

KING. What means that music?

[*Music again. The Shrine is suddenly lighted up, and an armed Figure appears, with a Raven on the Crest of his Helmet, and a Chain and Sword resembling those worn by* SIR GASTON; *the latter of which he waves slowly above his head.*

PIERCE. Now, by St. Anthony, the chain and the crescent sword!

KING. Help for De Blondeville! He hath swooned. Break off the bridal! Help, good my lords!

[*Music again. The Nobles crowd around the Altar, and the Curtain falls.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Moonlight. An outer Court in the Castle of Kenilworth. On one side huge Gothic Buildings stretching nearly across the Stage. A low Tower, the sides covered with ivy, and somewhat roughened by age, with a Platform on the top, occupies the centre. It is backed by a high Turret, in which there is a narrow Gothic Door, with a few iron Bars to admit the light within the Arch. Both this Tower and the Turret behind are edged by a deep Moat, in which the Water is seen glancing in the Moonlight, and which may appear to be separated from the Court by a low Wall. From the Platform on the top of the Tower, a Ladder is seen declining across the Moat to the Ground on the other side. The Tower, Platform, and Turret must all be of Carpenter's work, projected forward into the Stage.

ALBERT *sitting under the Tower, leaning upon his Harp.—*

Enter PIERCE, *cautiously.*

PIERCE. Ay, this should be the very spot! The tower, with the warder, that wont to keep watch on the platform, removed; the turret, the moat, and the fatal ladder. The door is still closed and dark. All is safe hitherto. But how to save him! The villain Gilbert had the start of me—a

harefooted ruffian when evil is astir!—and the nine o'clock bell, the signal of the deed, must be nigh upon sounding. Who is here? Young Albert the Minstrel. Say that I craved his aid? 'Tis a parlous youth, and one that, I ween, beareth scant goodwill to the Baron de Blondeville, for the sake of his ladye-love. And yet the trust is dangerous. I'll sound him first. Sir Harper!

AL. (*Rising.*) Ah, Pierce! I saw thee not.

PIERCE. Nay, stay where thou art; or rather come closer into the shade of the wall. I would not have either of us seen.

AL. Not seen! Wherefore?

PIERCE. Demand no questions, Signor Minstrel, and thou'lt hear no lies. What mak'st thou here, hanging over thy harp, and looking as melancholy as I have seen thee when thou hast stopt short in thy song for lack of a rhyme; or when the King, my good master, or the Queen, thy gracious mistress, hath fallen asleep or a-talking in the midst of thy newest roundelay. Ah, poor youth! poor youth! But what makest thou here? This is no place for a serenade. The Lady Isabel, I know, lodgeth in the Queen's bower.

AL. The Lady Isabel!

PIERCE. Go to! go to! Have I not seen thee with her merlin on thy wrist?—thou hast a hawk's eye to a pretty maiden—and her gazehound in thy leash—and could not I give a shrewd guess what game was afoot? Never think to deceive old Pierce! Why, I have been a wooer myself, man, in my time; have stuck my cap on the side of my head, and sung tender ditties, and sighed and languished, and moped and pined. I was called the Amorous Jester. Certes, few damsels could resist me, especially when I had shown my leg in a galliard. Didst ever—Hark! hark!—No; I was mistaken. I thought I heard the nine o'clock bell.

AL. It is not yet the hour.

PIERCE. Why, the moon hath risen.—Could it be the un-

bolting of the inner door of the turret? No! All is dark! —Albert, what mak'st thou here?

AL. I might demand the same of thee, Sir Jester; but thou hast a kindly heart, and I believe the same errand brought us both—yon poor prisoner!

PIERCE. Prisoner! Ay, 'tis a goodly state of things when the accuser is mewed up between four walls, and the accused goes at large.

AL. One, too, whom Heaven and earth conspire to denounce.—The appearance in the Chapel!

PIERCE. Talk not of that, boy! talk not of that! I saw the figure; I have seen it twice; and if ever disembodied spirit be permitted—Talk not of it, Albert! Doubtless thou hast a kindness for the apparition, since in the first place thou hast not seen it, and in the next it broke off thy rival's bridal; but for my poor part, although I be no fearfuller than another man with regard to things human, yet, under these old towers, and with the pale moonshine flickering in and out in this strange, ghastly way, I confess that I'd rather choose another subject. Besides, I want thine aid. Tell me truly, what wouldst thou of the prisoner?

AL. I would fain ask him a question; and I brought my harp with me to draw him to the grate. [*Preparing to strike.*

PIERCE. Strike not on thy life.—Be there not voices in the turret?—What question wouldst thou ask of Woodreeve?

AL. Did he not call the murdered knight Reginald de Tolville?

PIERCE. He did.

AL. (*Preparing again to strike his Harp.*) I must see him; must have speech with him.

PIERCE. Stop, on thy life! An' thou wouldst save his life, stop! I'll now tell thee what brought me hither. Look on yon ladder, stretched across the moat, close by the grated door which opens into the prisoner's chamber.

AL. Placed there by thee for his escape?

PIERCE. Escape! All the saints in the calendar would not induce him to flee! The King and I both sought to compass that matter this morning. We might as soon have persuaded Richard the Lion-hearted to run away from the stout Paynim, Saladin.

AL. The man was right. But wherefore, then, the ladder?

PIERCE. That's what I am about to tell thee—Doth the door move? No!—Two hours agone I was sauntering along the great avenue, pondering all that had chanced this morning, when that same figure, that thou wottest of, appeared in the twilight right afore me.

AL. Tush, man! 'Twas fancy! mere fancy!

PIERCE. As I live, I saw it. It beckoned to me, and then glided onward through the chase. I followed (for there was no resisting the awfulness of that mute command), until we reached a narrow glade in the forest, where, making a sign of caution and of silence, it disappeared. I sank upon the ground quite spent with fear, and remained, couching like a hare amidst the heath and the fern, until the Baron de Blondeville and his favourite groom Gilbert, a sturdy knave whom thou mayst have noted amongst his followers, approached. They saw me not, and pursued their discourse. In fine, I learnt that Woodreeve had resisted all threats of punishment and temptation to escape; but that Gilbert still trusted that he might lure him to leave the Castle for a brief space in search of witnesses for to-morrow's trial; that the warders within and without should be removed,—see, they are so!—keys of either turret door furnished to the vile minion; and the ladder, the accursed engine of their treachery, stretched across the moat. Look on it, Albert! See that line toward the middle where the wood is sawed nearly in twain! See how it vibrates even now in the evening wind! At the first step that the foot of man sets thereon it will snap like a flaxen thread, hurling the poor wretch into the deep and reedy moat, up whose precipitous sides the boldest swimmer

that ever breasted the ocean would vainly strive to win. He's lost! He's lost.

AL. Wherefore not alarm the Castle? Warn squire and knight, and baron and King? Wherefore not denounce the murderers on the instant?

PIERCE. Whoso had believed the poor Jester? Thou wouldst but have seen to-morrow another prisoner in the turret-chamber, and a bloody corse in the headsman's hands.

AL. Why not give warning even now to Woodreeve?

PIERCE. Already the ruffian is with him. Seest thou not a light through the bars of the grated door? Gilbert is strongly armed; the merchant wholly defenceless; and De Blondeville's parting charge was, "Stint not to use thy dagger; the moat tells no tales."

AL. Demon!

PIERCE. Mark me, Albert! Nine o'clock is the destined hour. Hasten to the Court of Guard. Say that thou hast espied a ladder, and fearest an escape. I should have thought of this afore. Send warders to the cell within and without. Away! There is still hope. Wherefore dost thou loiter?

[*A Bell sounds.*

AL. Hark!

PIERCE. The bell! the bell! He's lost! He's lost! The door is opening.

AL. I'll scale the tower. Speak not. Make no noise. I'll save him.

PIERCE. He's lost! He's lost!

[ALBERT *goes to the side of the Tower farthest from the Moat, and begins to climb it with great apparent difficulty, clinging to the ivy and catching by the projecting stones.* PIERCE *stands by, partly watching him, partly gazing up at the flat roof of the Tower, upon which* WOODREEVE *and* GILBERT *now enter from the Turret door.*

WOOD. I am much bounden to thee, friend, for thy kindness; and yet methinks I like not even to seem to flee like

a traitor from my high and holy cause. Art thou right certain that the messengers who were appointed to do my message to Dame Ursula and the Prior have been stayed by Sir Gaston?

GIL. Right certain.

WOOD. Why, so! And I have left a scroll in my prison-chamber to assure the King of my return before the tenth hour of the morning. And yet—

PIERCE. I'll call. No! The ruffian hath a drawn dagger in his hand. He's lost! He's lost! And the poor boy! the brave boy!—Avoid that stone! Cling to the ivy, Albert!

WOOD. Did not I hear a voice?

GIL. No. But we *shall* be caught an' thou dally thus! Come!

WOOD. Is the ladder safely fixed?

GIL. Ay, ay; safe enough for our purpose.

PIERCE. He can but die. Woodreeve!

WOOD. Who calleth?

GIL. Forward, I say.

PIERCE. Woodreeve! What ho! Woodreeve!

GIL. Forward! or—

(ALBERT, *who has now climbed the Tower, rushes towards* GILBERT, *and draws him suddenly back, as he is about to stab* WOODREEVE.)

AL. Seize his dagger, Merchant! Hold him whilst I secure his sword. Now forward, traitor! Forward thyself!

GIL. Help! help!

PIERCE. Call and welcome, good friend. There's none to hear. Thou hast ta'en care of that.

WOOD. Youth, be'st thou friend or foe?

PIERCE. Did he not save thy life? An assured friend.

AL. Talk not, but force the ruffian forward. So! I would but make him walk down his own ladder. Drag him onward.

[*They force* GILBERT *over the Parapet of the Tower; he clings to the Ladder, which breaks, and he falls with a heavy plunge into the Water.*)

WOOD. (*Throwing himself on* ALBERT'S *Neck.*) Boy, I thank thee!

PIERCE. Now, Heaven be praised, he's safe!

The Scene Falls.

SCENE II.

A Gothic Apartment in Kenilworth.

Enter on one side GASTON *and* GEOFFREY; *on the other* BENJAMIN *and another Attendant.*

GAS. Where have ye disposed the Jew?—I'll speak with thee speedily, friend. Said not some one that the holy Prior waited?

GEO. He attends your pleasure, good my lord.

GAS. Give him admittance. (*Exit* GEOFFREY.) Bid the Jew stand back until the priest be dispatched, and do thou watch for Gilbert, and speed him to me so soon as he returns to the Palace. I have sent him forth on an errand.

[*Exit Attendant.*

Enter PRIOR.

Save thee, reverend Prior!

PRIOR. Benedicite, son. I came in haste, hearing that thou hadst been ill at ease, lest thou shouldst require to be shriven; but truly—

GAS. I look not, thou wouldst say, like a penitent on his death-bed. My business with thee, good father, hath much of mirth and nought of mourning. Wilt thou marry me, Sir Prior? Ay or no?

PRIOR. The wedding holds, then?

GAS. Certes. Wherefore not?

PRIOR. Nay, noble Baron, we had heard rumours, even in

the solitude of our cloister, of an awful visitation cutting short the bridal—

GAS. Tush! tush! A sunbeam! a shadow! a waving banner! a marble effigy! a something or a nothing, as thou wilt! While standing before the altar with my lady-love, I was seized with a sudden distemperature not unfrequent with me, and fell fainting against the gilded rail; and in the panic and wonderment caused by my untimely swoon, divers of the Queen's gentlewomen, and a sort of court lords of a right womanly temper, carpet knights, bold only in the lists, warriors who never saw battle, conjured up this vision. Marry, the King laughs the tale to scorn. The bridal holds for to-morrow. Fail me not.

PRIOR. But my Lord of York—

GAS. Ah! my Lord of York is a wise and pious prelate—but of a feeble body. He waxeth old; hath been some deal shaken of late; and now—Thou, father, shalt perform the 'spousal rights; and in requital of that good deed shalt exchange this poor Priory of St. Mary's for the rich Abbey of Glastonbury;—a boon which the King my master hath graciously placed at my dispose.

PRIOR. I render thanks to him and to thee; albei twell content with my humble lot. Hast thou heard that a merchant called Woodreeve hath sent to our Priory to require witnesses and muniments touching the interment of a knight named Reginald de Tolville?

GAS. Hath he so? Of a surety no such muniments be there, or long ago the good monks of St. Mary's would have pursued and punished the murderer. Farewell till to-morrow, reverend Prior—I had forgot me—my Lord Abbot! I leave this matter of the muniments to thy discretion. Holla! my pages! Wait on the holy father. (*Exit* PRIOR.) Monk, thou art mine! Lowly son of the cloister, I have thee sure! I would my Lord of York were of thy spirit! and I would—but the King's favour, and the Prior's testimony, and my own

dauntless seeming will bear me harmless. Let me but win yonder misbeliever, and then, however Gilbert speed, I am secure.—Now, Jew! (BENJAMIN *advances.*) Thy name, I hear, is Benjamin. Ha! mine old acquaintance! Thou seemest strange with me. Hast thou forgot my face?

BEN. Truly, my honoured lord, I remember it not.

GAS. Dost thou not remember our dealings ten years agone at Bruges?

BEN. Nay, good my lord, I never visited Bruges.

GAS. Pshaw! What matters the place! At Ostend, or at Antwerp, or at Ghent—or where thou wilt! 'Tis small matter at which of your marts a wandering soldier and a roaming Jew may have driven a bargain. Dost thou not remember that some ten years past I bought of thee a golden chain—this that thou seest?—Nay, hear me out! Perchance, for this was in the season of my youth, some wildnesses of which be still to expiate—Perchance the price remained unpaid. This purse—Take it, I say.

BEN. Mine honoured lord!

GAS. Nay, take the gold, good Benjamin. This is a timely meeting for us both. Thou comest to petition the King to remit certain fines imposed on thyself and thy tribe, in which petition none can give thee better furtherance than myself;—and I, as it chances, have present need of thy testimony as to the purchase of the chain. A madman hath dared to accuse—Thou dost not take the purse.

BEN. My honoured lord—

GAS. Take the purse, man. Touch the gold. 'Twill quicken thy apprehension.

BEN. Full surely thou mistakest, noble Baron. I never saw the chain nor thyself till this hour.

GAS. Pshaw! Pshaw! Thou art an old man, Jew, and forgetful. I bought the jewel of thee ten years agone. Here is wherewithal to pay thee, and another purse to defray the interest. Dost thou apprehend me now? Thou art for-

tunate to have met with me. I'll speed thine errand with the King—Ay, note the toy well. The workmanship of the cunning goldsmith, John of Liege, is it not? Thou must swear to the sale.

BEN. By the law of Moses, good my lord, I cannot.

GAS. What! dost thou crave more monies? Good sooth, the gaud is heavy, and of a quaint device. Say that I add another purse. There! Now, Jew, thou hast an emperor's guerdon. Hark ye, Benjamin! No word of this brief parley. Take thy gold, and fare thee well! Be ready, and be resolute.

BEN. Good my lord!—

GAS. Well!

BEN. I cannot avouch this tale.

GAS. I tell thee thou must swear.

BEN. I dare not. 'Tis a falsehood.

GAS. A falsehood! Palterest thou at that? Thou art an old man, Benjamin, and shouldst know somewhat of the world and its ways. Didst thou ever in thy weary pilgrimage meet with such a thing as Truth? Falsehood! Why all that seemeth fairest and sweetest on this earth—honour and loyalty, friendship and love, the meeting smile and the parting tear, the vows of woman and the promises of man, what be they but falsehood? Go to, Jew! Thou hast forced me to speak plainly. I am not to be mocked by words. I know thee, know thy very thoughts for lies, and that which thou callest thy virtue for the veriest lie of all. Punishment, not crime, is what thou dreadest. And mark me, Jew! Thou art of a race scorned of man and rejected of Heaven, wanderers over the face of the earth, slaves and outcasts amongst the nations. But better were it for thee to abide till the end of time the vilest destiny of the meanest of thy people, than to provoke the enmity of Gaston de Blondeville. Crouch not, abject minion, but obey. Take the gold, which is thine idol, and add it to the hoards in the secret chamber of thy

little dwelling at Lincoln. Thou seest that I know thee. Do my bidding, and thou shalt find me thy friend. (*Exit* BENJAMIN.) So! that slave is sped. The monk was honester. He talked not of virtue. Now to seek Gilbert. I marvel that he cometh not. And then with a light foot and a smiling visage to the royal banquet. Would that the night were past! Surely that boy suspecteth nought. Would that this night were over past! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

A splendid Hall in Kenilworth Castle.—Preparations for a superb Banquet.—Chairs of State for the KING *and* QUEEN, *the whole so managed as that the back of the Stage should be left vacant and deep for the representation of the Pageants afterwards indicated. Lords, Ladies, and Attendants in the Hall.* PIERCE *and* ALBERT *meeting in front.*

PIERCE. He would not flee?

AL. No. I proposed to conceal him in my chamber, or to pass him through the portal disguised in my own minstrel weed, or in thy habit and cap—a goodly mask!

PIERCE. Let me tell thee, Albert, a wiser man than he hath worn this self-same habit afore now. He persisteth in his resolve?

AL. He's bent to abide the trial.

PIERCE. After all that we have seen! Well, he that's born to be hanged will never be drowned. We should have let him take the moat. I warrant me he would have swam like a water-spaniel. T'other dog died?

AL. Full surely. But if thou knewest how precious Woodreeve's life is to me! I have that to reveal to thee—

PIERCE. Hush! The King and Queen! Draw back a space!

Enter the KING, QUEEN, HUNTINGDON, ISABEL, GERTRUDE *Lords, and Ladies.*

KING. Where tarrieth the bridegroom? Knoweth any man aught of the Baron de Blondeville? Where hast thou bestowed thy smiles, young Isabel? We hold this feast in thine honour, fair bride!

Is. Alas! my liege! Call me not, I beseech thee, by that title of misery! I am not the bride of the Baron de Blondeville; I never will be such.

KING. Say'st thou, lady? This very morn did I lead thee to the altar to plight thy nuptial vow to this same Baron; and afore twelve hours be gone thou repentest thy choice. Many a bard hath sung of the inconstancy of woman, but this passeth story.

QUEEN. Your Grace is somewhat harsh with Isabel. The terror of yonder fearful visitation still hangs on her spirit. Even I myself—

KING. Tush! tush! a trick! a delusion! Speak not of it, Eleanor. We came to keep a merry bridal in Kenilworth, and not to be feared by phantasms. Hold thee ready at the seventh hour to-morrow, fair maid!

Is. Alas! alas! And will mine honoured father give consent?

KING. Thine honoured father hath consented.

Is. Alas! And my good Lord of York, will he perform the rites?

KING. Yes. No. I know not; nor, in good sooth, do I care. 'Tis a pious prelate, but some deal given to peevish superstition. Wedded thou shalt be.

Is. And to one who, set aside yonder awful vision, stands accused of murder! Oh, my liege, thou who art kind and just to all, take pity on the poor maiden whom thou hast graced even from her girlish days with thy royal favour, the Queen's poor handmaiden! Think if this charge be proved, and thou shouldst make her that scorned and loathed being

a murderer's bride, bereft of her father's spotless name, of her own spotless reputation, linked to blood and sin and shame! Oh, gracious King, have pity on the poor Isabel! doom her not to such a fate! Beseech thee, have pity!

KING. Rise, sweetest! Nought that thou fearest can befall. We have sifted the Baron de Blondeville, and find him pure as thyself of this foul stain. Comfort thy fair daughter, my Lord of Huntingdon! Say to her all that Gaston said to us of this Merchant's misdeeds at Embrun, and of the malice which he beareth toward him as the detector and punisher of his wickedness. Calm thee, dear maiden! The rites shall be deferred until after this form of trial, to which we shame to expose our brave and stainless knight, shall have been undergone; so that the very shadow of a fear may no longer cloud thy gay spirit.

Is. Even for this, Sire, I thank thee. But still—

KING. Nay, nay, no buts, maiden! Cheer thee, and prepare to receive thy noble wooer. Think that thou hast gain'd another day of sovereignty (none of the gentle sex object to that), and make a kindly use of thy power. To the banquet, fair dames! To the banquet! Let each knight lead his lady-love. (*The* KING, QUEEN, ISABEL, GERTRUDE, HUNTINGDON, *and other Lords and Ladies seat themselves at the Banquet.* PIERCE *and* ALBERT *advance to the Table.*) And here, in happy hour, come the Fool and the Minstrel to make us sport.

HUNT. Folly and Poesy conjoined. What say'st thou to that, Minstrel?

PIERCE. By'r Lady, my Lord of Huntingdon, there's nothing strange in that conjunction. They do most commonly walk hand in hand. Marry, Folly sometimes goes alone. Your poet is always a fool; but your fool is not always a poet.

GER. What then, Sir Jester?

PIERCE. What not, fair Madam? Tell me that. Show

me one noddle where folly doth not dwell, and I'll be bound to show thee a thousand where she doth. Fools all, Lady Gertrude! Fools all! An' every man were clad in his proper livery, motley would be your only wear.

GER. And woman?

KING. Ay, fool! Get thy wit out of that quicksand an' thou canst.

Enter GASTON.

Gaston, thou art late. Seat thyself beside thy fair lady and mistress. Give him way, my good lords.

GAS. (*Throwing himself on the ground beside* ISABEL.) Nay, Sire, here is the only place I covet, that where I would fix me now and for ever. Isabel! Wilt thou not vouchsafe one word, one glance to thy poor servant?

KING. Be not thus ungracious, maiden! We'll try if music will soften her heart. Dost thou hear, Minstrel? Some gentle strain!

QUEEN. A lay of dear Provence, good Albert.

ALBERT *Sings.*

'Tis a gay summer morn and the golden beams dance
On the glittering wave of the rapid Durance,
Where Sir Reginald's castle its broad shadow throws
O'er the bay and the linden, the cypress and rose:
And in that rosy bower a lady so bright
Sits telling her beads for her own absent knight,
Whilst her little son plays round the fond mother's knee,
And the wandering stock-dove is scared by his glee.

'Tis a calm summer eve and the silver beams dance
On the glittering wave of the rapid Durance,
Where Sir Reginald's castle its broad shadow throws
O'er the bay and the linden, the cypress and rose:

But the roses are withered, the spoiler is there,
Gone, gone the bright lady, and gone the young heir;
The good knight hath perished beyond the salt sea,
And they, like the stock-dove, lone wanderers be.

QUEEN. Where got'st thou that strain, Albert?

AL. On the banks of my native Durance, Madam.

QUEEN. Who taught it thee?

AL. My memory and my heart.

QUEEN. Dost thou know aught of the lay, Sir Gaston? Thou, too, art Provençal, and hast a fair castle on those fair banks. Perchance thou rememberest the tale.

GAS. The tale is false, royal Madam.

AL. False! Doth the Baron de Blondeville hold yonder lay for false?

GAS. Darest thou avouch it for true?

PIERCE. God a mercy! The truth of a song! Said I not sooth, my Lady Gertrude, fools all?

GAS. What meanest thou by that strain, I ask thee?

PIERCE. Riddle me, riddle me ree! Ask a poet to construe his own meaning! Look to yourselves, gentle dames, the next thing he'll demand will be a woman's reason. (*To* ALBERT.) Art thou mad?

KING. What chafes thee thus, Gaston?

GAS. Nought, my liege! nought!

KING. Have ye no pageant astir? no masque? Mirth lags to-night. [*A fancy Dance.*

KING. Thanks, gentle maidens—a deft measure! Now one merry roundelay, and then to bed. (***Solemn Music at the end of the Hall.***) What music is that? Said I not, Albert, a lightsome strain?

AL. My harp is silent, Sire.

PIERCE. Look!

[*Music again. At the end of the Hall, a Pageant appears, representing the Sea-shore, with a Knight resembling the*

Figure seen in the Chapel, bearing the cognisance of a Raven on the Helmet taking leave of a Lady, who holds a Boy in her arms. The Knight steps into a Boat, and the Vision disappears, or is concealed by Vapours.

PIERCE. The figure of the morning! Saw ye not the raven on the crest?

AL. And the lady! the lovely sad lady! Queen Eleanor, hast thou never seen one so beautiful and so pale?

QUEEN. I have.

KING. See to De Blondeville! Knows any here of this pageant?

GER. Again! again!

[*Martial Music. The same Knight appears fighting on the Plains of Palestine. An Eastern City is seen in the Distance. He wins the Crescent-shaped Sword, but is overpowered and imprisoned by the Infidels, after being left for dead by the Christians. The Pageant vanishes as before.*

PIERCE. Still the same figure! Marked ye the crescent-sword?

KING. Gaston! Why, Gaston! Once more I ask, knoweth any man here of this mummery?

[*Music again. A Castle on the Banks of the Durance. A Man resembling Sir Gaston in height and figure, but with his Face hidden by the Plumes of his Cap, appears chasing from the Castle the Lady seen in the first Pageant, leading a Child in her hand, whilst a Dove is seen flying over head. It again disappears. The Music in this, as in the other scenes of this Vision, lasts during the whole time that the Figures remain visible; and, in this instance, the strain finishes with the concluding bars of* ALBERT'S *last Song.*

AL. "And they, like the stock-dove, lone wanderers be," said the song sooth, nobles? What say'st thou, Sir Gaston? Hast thou ever seen that castle on the Durance?

PIERCE. Hush! hush!

KING. Gaston! arouse thee, man? This is sorcery—rank sorcery!

[*Music again. A Wood, with the Towers of Kenilworth in the Distance. Three Travellers are seen.* WOODREEVE, *the* KNIGHT OF THE RAVEN, *and another Man with a Torch. They are set upon by seven or eight Ruffians, headed by the Person who appeared in the last Pageant, wearing a Visor. They overpower the Travellers; and in the Struggle, the Visor falls, disclosing the features of* SIR GASTON DE BLONDEVILLE, *who stabs the* KNIGHT *with his own Sword.*

Towards the close of this Pageant, the Personages of the Scene exclaim severally:

PIERCE. The Merchant's very story!

HUNT. The vizor falls!

QUEEN. 'Tis the Baron de Blondeville!

KING. Of a surety, this must be witchcraft!

[*And as the Pageant concludes, the Curtain falls.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Hall fitted up as a Court of Justice, with a Throne on one side. At the bottom, a Gallery.

The KING *on his Throne, the* ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, LORD HUNTINGDON, GASTON, *and other Peers near him; in front,* PIERCE, *the* HOST, *and other Spectators; behind,* BENJAMIN *and the* PRIOR.

KING. Be ye all ready? Ourself will sit in judgment in this cause, aided by thy wisdom, my Lord of York, and thine Lord Earl. Gaston, thou lookest cheerily, as one who feareth nought. Bring in the Merchant.

PIERCE. (*To the* HOST.) No tidings of Albert yet? nor of the Monk Austen?

HOST. None.

Enter WOODREEVE, *guarded and chained.*

PIERCE. And Woodreeve chained! And De Blondeville on the step of the throne! (*Advancing to the* KING.) Nay, an' your Highness be for a game of Change-all this fine morning, best take my cap and bauble, and give me the sceptre and crown. Quick! quick! ye shall see how gloriously I'll enact the King!

KING. Hold, knave! What means this foolery?

PIERCE. So please you, Sire, seeing the accuser bound and warded like a prisoner, and the accused ermined and honoured like a judge, I deemed the game might be going round.

KING. Unbind the man. And thou, Sir Fool, take heed that thy back pay not the offences of thy tongue. I like not meddlers in this matter. The young Minstrel, Albert, is he in presence?

HUNT. He left the Castle at daybreak, good my liege.

GAS. Gone! Whither?

ARCH. Doubtless the youth will return right speedily. Is it your Grace's pleasure that the trial proceed?

KING. Dost thou, Woodreeve, hold constant in thine accusation? Bethink thee, man, at what hazard thou speakest. Beware, lest the promptings of hatred or revenge, or the false bravery of a daring spirit, beguile thee into peril. Thou lookest wan and haggard, fitter for the leech than the justizer. Withdraw the charge, I counsel thee.

GAS. Nay, nay, my liege; I, in my turn, claim this trial of thy justice. Yon Merchant hath arraigned me, in the face of day, of a foul murder; and, albeit they who know me make a mock of the accusation, yet will the tale spread over the land until it become the common talk of peer and peasant. Give him the trial which he craved, and render me mine honour.

WOOD. Fear not my infirmity of purpose, Baron de Blondeville. I thank his Grace for his counsel, but I follow it not. I am no warrior, good my liege; I was never trained to the desperate rush of battle, to woo peril as a bride, and give or receive death with the same fierce and reckless joy. I am a man of peace, of a calm spirit, of frugal habits, and moderate desires. All that I wished on this side Heaven it hath pleased Heaven to bestow upon me—sufficient wealth, an unblemished reputation, a thrice happy home. I have a wife whom I love, a fair and gracious woman; and three

prattling little ones, as lovely and as loving as ever climbed a father's knee or hung around his neck. The youngest—Pshaw! I must quell these thoughts if I would be a man. But, good my liege, consider within thyself whether he, who duly, night and morning, renders thanks for such blessings, would, for thriftless malice or unprofitable hatred, or for aught in this wide world, save truth and conscience, put those dear ones in jeopardy. The words that I am about to speak may make my wife a weeping widow, and my children helpless orphans, may thrust them forth as outcasts and wanderers over the face of the earth; but the words shall be spoken—the innocent blood shall be avenged, the restless shade shall be appeased. Henry of England! I call on thee for justice on the man who stands at thy right hand—the robber and murderer, Gaston de Blondeville!

GAS. Liar! Slave!

KING. Thy wrath is out of place. Calm thee, Gaston. Dost think that I have forgotten the hour when thy valour saved my life? And for thee, man, be thou too satisfied. Thou shalt have justice!

PIERCE. Now would not I give my cock's-comb for yon brave Merchant's head, whether Albert and the Monk arrive or no. Oh! that I had never brought him hither!

KING. Speak, Woodreeve. Tell how thou first fell in with the knight whom thou callest Reginald de Tolville.

WOOD. At Whitby, my liege, where I had landed from the Baltic Seas, and he, bound to a port in Normandy, had been driven by stress of weather.

ARCH. Did the knight tell thee aught of his story?

GAS. What boots that question, my Lord of York? Reginald de Tolville died fourteen years agone at Joppa.

ARCH. Merchant, I await thine answer.

WOOD. A grave and a sad man was the good knight, holy Sir, and little cared to speak of himself or his sorrows. So

far I learnt: that he was of Provence; and having gone under a vow to fight in the Holy Land, had been struck down in battle, and carried into captivity by the Infidels. A dreary fate was that for a Christian knight; but a sharper grief awaited him on his escape from his Moslem prison, for then he heard tidings that an ambitious kinsman had seized his demesne, and that his lady-wife and her little son had wandered none knew whither. Some said that the poor lady pined away, and died. And so, of a surety, thought the good knight, for he seldom spake of her, and seemed to have no hope or purpose in this life save that of seeking the young boy, his only child.

ARCH. Did he name the kinsman who had usurped his lands?

GAS. Ay, dare they!

WOOD. He named him not.

ARCH. Had he any token by which to discover the boy?

WOOD. After death, an epistle, worn with age and with much reading, was found on his person—a chaste and tender scroll, from a chaste and tender wife. It spoke, amongst other of those fond triflings that make wedded love so dear, of a mark of a mulberry on the boy's arm, whose hue waxed or waned as the fruit ripened or decayed—"Even," said the poor lady, "as the blood was wont to rush into my cheeks when I heard the steps of mine own true knight upon the stair." She was doomed never to hear that step again.

ARCH. Where is that epistle now?

WOOD. I delivered the scroll to Father Austen, of the Priory of St. Mary's, when, being compelled to return homeward, I resigned to the good Prior the task of pursuing this foul murder. Alas! I should rather have abandoned my home and my merchandise, than have left Christian blood unavenged!

KING. Produce thy witnesses, man! My Lord of York an' thou dalliest thus in idle talk, this trial is like to

endure till sunset. Remember, we have a bridal toward. The witnesses!

WOOD. The Prior of St. Mary's.

KING. Give ye good den, reverend Prior. Question him, Merchant. Wherefore pause ye thus?

WOOD. Is yonder monk the head of St Mary's Priory?.

KING. Of a surety. Doth not thy memory serve so far?

WOOD. He whom I knew as such, was an aged man and a faltering. For this stately father, I remember him not.

KING. How long hast thou been at the head of the monks of St. Mary's?

PRIOR Somewhat better than four years.

WOOD. Alas! and the good Prior John is dead! Hast thou searched the records of thy house, reverend Prior, for a chronicle of the murder and burial of Reginald de Tolville?

PRIOR. None such can be found.

KING. How answerest thou that, Woodreeve?

WOOD. The godly clerk, Father Austen, set down the tale from my own lips in the Latin tongue. I myself signed the scroll.

PRIOR. There be the rolls of our house. Search an' thou wilt.

WOOD. One scroll is a wanting.

KING. Dar'st thou impeach a son of the Holy Church?

WOOD. I saw the scroll, my liege; and Father Austen—call Father Austen of St. Mary's.

PRIOR. The good father is absent on pilgrimage to the shrine of the Martyr Becket.

PIERCE. (*To the* HOST.) Speak boldly, man! (*Aloud.*) He hath returned as far as Warwick, Sire, where he lieth sick. This man saw him but two days past. Speak! canst thou not? The good father will be here ere the vesper bell hath rung.

KING. Sirrah, Fool, have I not warned thee against intermeddling in this matter?

ARCH. How knowest thou of Austen's return, Pierce?

PIERCE. One of his penitents, good my lord, finding his sins was over heavy for his own bearing, hath set forth to meet him and speed his return.

WOOD. Delay the judgment, I beseech your Highness. This testimony imports me much.

GAS. On the word of a Jester!

KING. Proceed.

HUNT. Reverend Prior, wast thou a monk of this rule six years agone?

PRIOR. I was so.

HUNT. Rememberest thou aught of the tale which this Merchant tells?

PRIOR. Nought.

WOOD. Thou swearest?

PRIOR. I swear.

WOOD. Is there not near the high altar a brass inscribed to the pious memory of Reginald de Tolville?

PRIOR. There is none.

WOOD. Thou swearest?

PRIOR. I swear. Hast thou aught more to ask?

WOOD. Retire! retire!

KING. Hast thou other witnesses?

WOOD. One—only one. A poor and aged widow, to whose house, hard by the scene of murder, we bore the bleeding body. Call Ursula Syncomb. Yestermorn I saw her, and she, albeit, infirm of body, is sound of mind and of heart. She remembered the scene of horror well, and she will not fail me, for she is poor and lowly—too lowly for ambition, too poor for fear; and draweth overnigh to the Great Judgment Seat, to quail at an earthly king. Call Ursula Syncomb. Wherefore comes she not?

OFFICER. She died yester eve.

WOOD. Now, Heaven grant me patience that I may die also!

ARCH. Hast thou none other witness? Bethink thyself, son.

WOOD. None! none!—Yes! yonder chain.

GAS. The chain! Come forward, Benjamin. My liege, by the strange chance that oft times worketh its way in this mad world, I have met here in Kenilworth the very Jew of whom I purchased this same gaud. Stand forth, Benjamin. Bought I not the chain of thee ten years agone in Flanders?

BEN. Ay, noble Baron, at Bruges for fifty marks of gold.

GAS. Now, Sire!

WOOD. So please your Highness, have I freedom to demand one question of the Jew?

KING. Speak.

WOOD. How knowest thou this chain to be the same which thou say'st the Baron de Blondeville purchased of thee in Flanders?

BEN. By the weight, the gold, and the fabric. None, save John of Liege, ever twisted and intertwisted a thread of gold after the fashion of these links; and John of Liege wrought only for myself.

WOOD. Thou knowest not of any secret token by which the jewel may be recognised?

BEN. None. None is needful.

WOOD. Doth the Baron de Blondeville—Wilt thou not listen, my lord?—Again I ask, doth the Baron de Blondeville know any mark or sign by which the chain he wears may be distinguished from others wrought by the same cunning hand?

KING. Answer, Gaston.

GAS. I know of none.

WOOD. Then, good my liege, I do know of such token; from a clear and heedful sight whereof did I challenge the chain and the wearer. Press the centre knob of the clasp, and the gold will recede on either side and discover two

limnings, the portraits of the good knight and of his chaste and fair lady. He showed them to me on the last morning that we journeyed together, the last morning of his life.

GAS. This tale is false as the rest. The knob moves not.

WOOD. Press harder, my liege! The spring perchance is rusted—press harder! I am content to rest on this mute evidence, the rightful justice for which I cry, the truth which I defend, and the poor life for which I strive. Press harder. (*The pictures appear.*) Look ye, now!

KING. Of a truth here be two portraitures. Him of the Raven Crest, but younger, and a fair woman.

HUNT. Ay, such as last night—

ARCH. She minds me of young Albert.

GAS. A counterfeit, my liege!—a base counterfeit! Woodreeve hath corrupted the dog Jew! They were seen together at the hostel, together at the drawbridge. The chain remained all night with the unbeliever.

HUNT. Certes, the Merchant may have tampered with the Jew. Best demand—

GAS. In private, Lord Earl. Question each apart.

KING. As thou sayest, Gaston. Away with him to prison!

BEN. My liege—

KING, Off with him! (*Exit* BENJAMIN, *guarded.*) Thou hast none other witness?

WOOD. None on earth.

KING. Then, my lords—

[*The* KING *speaks apart to* HUNTINGDON *and the* ARCHBISHOP.

PIERCE. (*To the* HOST.) Haste to the hostel, and see if Austen be not arrived, or Albert. Speed them hither. 'Tis the only hope, the only chance. (*Exit* HOST.) Ha! again!

[*Solemn Music. The Spectre of the Knight with the Raven Crest appears in the Gallery for a short space, and then vanishes.*

KING. This is witchcraft, my Lord of York! rank sorcery! and should be punished at the stake. Doubtless the limnings and the pageants be illusions of the foul fiend. Look at De Blondeville! Could aught save the agency of the Evil One so quail the spirit of the bravest knight of Provence?

ARCH. I have seen as bold a spirit cast down by an evil conscience, Sire. And yon poor Merchant—

PRIOR. Be sure that this Woodreeve is a sorcerer, holy Sir! The woman Ursula Syncomb, whose death he bemoaned, was a known witch.

GEO. Ay; and last night he himself vanished from the prison-chamber. My lord sought him, and he was gone, no bolt drawn or ward touched. In a brief space I repaired thither, and there I found him as calm as he stands now.

KING. A most foul and malignant sorcerer! Record the Baron de Blondeville as pure of all stain; and arraign Woodreeve of sorcery. Prepare the faggot and the stake. Trial shall be had, and execution done without let or pause. Dost thou hear, Gaston? We are about to try thine accuser for witchcraft.

WOOD. That mockery were needless. I am prepared to die, and instantly. But, my liege, a Power mightier than thine own hath visibly raised its awful hand to strike down the guilty. To that All-righteous Power I make appeal. I demand of thee the wager of battle, King Henry, and by that ordeal will I stand or fall. Baron de Blondeville, receive my challenge! [*Throwing down his Glove.*

KING. Gaston! How say ye, my lords?

ARCH. He hath appealed to Heaven, and your Grace may not gainsay his suit.

GAS. Merchant, I accept thy challenge, and will fight thee or thy champion when and where thou listeth. This ordeal likes me well.

KING. His champion. Himself thou must not fight. It were to break all law of chivalry to match a belted knight

with a base burgher. Forward to the lists, my lords, and sound the clarions bravely. Thy champion shall find a fair field, Woodreeve, and a gallant foe. But if none appeareth for thee at the third trumpet blast, so surely thou shalt die. On to the lists. [*Exeunt omnes.*

SCENE III.

A Wood near Kenilworth.

Enter ALBERT *and the* HOST, *meeting.*

HOST. Albert, alone!

AL. Mine Host, and breathless! How goes yonder trial? Tell me quickly.

HOST. When I can speak.

AL. One word may answer that question.

HOST. Wait till I can speak, I say. What hast thou made of Austen?

AL. I found him at Warwick, sick almost to death; and have left him, spent and travel-sore, at thy dwelling. But the trial? I have the scroll!—Tell me of the trial!

HOST. Let me fetch breath, boy! I'll tell thee presently.

AL. Now! now! good Host! one word!

HOST. Yonder comes one who can satisfy thee. I must go look to my hostel. [*Exit.*

Enter PIERCE.

AL. Pierce! what tidings? The trial? The trial?

PIERCE. I sent yon sordid knave to speed thee. But the time is past. The man is condemned.

AL. De Blondeville of the murder?

PIERCE. Woodreeve of sorcery. The murderer is acquitted.

AL. Acquitted! But Austen is at hand. I have the

scroll, the precious scroll which hath given me back to life, and hope, and love! Queen Eleanor will know the character well, for she hath an epistle, traced by the same honoured hand, wherein much of that sad tale is shadowed forth, albeit Death came on before the name of the victim were revealed. Oh, when the sound of that name, which I had so often striven to recal, burst upon me yesterday, like the images of some long-forgotten dream, bringing back to memory the grievous wrongs of my orphanage, and *his* base cruelties through whom I am an orphan! And he to escape! that treacherous usurper, that double murderer! He to escape, and to wed Isabel, whilst yon poor Merchant perishes! He shall die, I tell thee, Pierce! De Blondeville shall die! And Woodreeve shall be saved!

PIERCE. He hath claimed the wager of battle, but 'tis too late. He was borne instantly to the lists, and unless some knight appear in his defence before the clarions have thrice sounded—and once already I have heard the blast—so surely he must die.

AL. Will no brave English knight do battle for the innocent?

PIERCE. None, boy, none. They be all cravens. That there should be but one honest knight in England, and he a ghost! but one true witness, and he a phantasm, that hath not breath enow to swell a child's trumpet! The King! Talk of witchcraft! 'Tis he that is bewitched, and by a most devilish sorcery. The King upholds the Baron, and who may gainsay his will! Whither goest thou?

AL. To the hostel.

PIERCE. For Austen? The time is past. Long ere he could win to Kenilworth, poor Woodreeve—Nought can save him.

AL. Hearken, Pierce! I saw but now a knight of Provence, and he—The merchant shall be saved.

PIERCE. Fly, then. But 'tis too late.

AL. Never for a high and holy purpose. Delay time all thou canst. He shall be saved. [*Exit.*

PIERCE. Art thou sure of thy Provençal? He's gone 'Tis a brave boy, but—Hark! The clarion! Too late! Too late! [*Exit.*

[*The Lists prepared for combat. On one side a Chair, in which* WOODREEVE *is placed, with a Stake, Faggots, &c., near. On the other, a Pavilion, under which the* QUEEN, *the* ARCHBISHOP, ISABEL, GERTRUDE, *and other Ladies are seated. At the bottom the Barriers. The* KING, LORD HUNTINGDON, SIR GASTON, *Marshals, Heralds, &c. on the front.*

KING. Hath proclamation been made of this ordeal, and the trumpet sounded, Herald?

HERALD. Twice, my liege.

KING. And no knight hath yet appeared for the appellant?

HERALD. None, Sire. None.

KING. Keep even time, Lord Marshal; and thou, Merchant, prepare for thy great accompt.

WOOD. Be that as Heaven willeth. I am content to live or die.

KING. Dost thou not tremble at yonder pile?

WOOD. Thou seest me, King. Do I tremble?

KING. I would yet spare thee that painful death. Confess thy sorcery, retract thine accusation, and thy doom shall be softened.

WOOD. Confess! Retract! Perish with a falsehood on my lips! Rather, a thousand-fold, the faggot and the stake, the half-hour's agony, than those words of sin and shame!

KING. Perish, then, in thy obstinacy.

IS. Alas! for the brave Merchant!

KING. How say'st thou, Lady Isabel? I sent for thee that thy presence might inspirit thine own true knight. But this is like to prove a bloodless victory. Hold thee ready for

the bridal, maiden, so soon as the ordeal be past. Wherefore droop'st thou, sweet one? Have ye not heard, fair dames, that De Blondeville is acquitted?

QUEEN. We have heard all that hath chanced, my liege; and I would fain question the Merchant touching certain passages [that concern me nearly. I would that my suit might prevail with your Highness to delay his death!

KING. Seek not of me, Eleanor, that which I may not grant.

HUNT. How runs the sand in the glass?

MAR. Low, my good lord. Hark! some one knocketh at the Barrier.

KING. Give him admittance straight.

Enter PIERCE.

Is. Now, Heaven grant!—Alas! 'tis but the kindly Jester!

PIERCE. Father Austen is arrived, good my liege.

KING. 'Tis over late.

PIERCE. A champion is on the way.

MAR. He must make quick despatch, for the last sands are in the glass.

GAS. Nay, my Lord Marshal, hurry not. Give me to combat for this victory, and win back mine honour with mine own good arm. Heaven send the champion prove a stalwart knight! Ye have seen me fight, lords, for loyalty and for renown, but never yet for honour. Hurry not, my Lord Marshal.

KING. Keep even time.

ARCH. (*To* PIERCE, *who has so placed himself as to see over the Barriers.*) Seest thou no one approaching, good Pierce?

PIERCE. None, holy Sir.

MAR. The sand is almost run.

GER. Seest thou no one yet?

PIERCE. Yes! No! Yes! Afar off. The trees hide him!

Is. A man?—an armed man?

PIERCE. Yes, he approacheth! He draweth nearer and more near. He cometh at speed!

MAR. The time is out.

KING. Sound trumpets the last summons. (*The Trumpets sound.*) No champion appeareth. Lead the Merchant to the stake. Be the chains ready? Bring torches to fire the pile!

PIERCE. He's here! The champion is here.

KING. (*To those who were conducting the Merchant.*) Hold! (*Then to the People at the Barrier.*) Give entrance to the stranger.

Enter ALBERT, *armed, with the vizor of his helmet down.*

'Tis a mere youth! Comest thou as champion for the Merchant, Hugh Woodreeve, to encounter the famous knight, Gaston de Blondeville?

AL. I do.

KING. Art thou of noble strain?

AL. I am so.

KING. Where be thy vouchers?

AL. (*Advancing to the* QUEEN, *and raising the vizor of his helmet, then partially letting it down so as still to conceal his face.*) Royal Madam, to thee I make appeal. Vouchsafe to peruse yonder scroll.

PIERCE. (*Apart to* WOODREEVE.) 'Tis Albert!

KING. Some Provençal gallant! Youth, thou hast chosen a strange witness of thy gentleness, but one by whose word we must needs abide. Dost thou vouch for the champion, Queen Eleanor?

QUEEN. Of a surety, the youth is of noble blood. Peril it not on this hazard.

Is. Oh no, no, no!

AL. Gracious Madam, the peril must be undergone. Forbid me not, sweet lady! Rather let thy fair looks strengthen me for the combat.

Is. Oh no, no, no!

KING. Change thy purpose, youth. The sword of him whom thou defiest were certain death to one so slight of frame. I guess that thou art some fiery spirit of the hot South, stolen away from parent or guardian to seek renown in Merry England. If so, content thee. Enow of fame hast thou won in challenging De Blondeville. Retire, I charge thee.

AL. I come not to win fame, but to rescue innocence.

WOOD. Yet do not this battle, youth, I beseech thee! I am resigned to die, not as the soldier falls, striving, but as the martyr, with a firm heart, and limbs that struggle not. But it would trouble the calm of my parting hour to see thy young life ebbing out at my side. Do not this battle.

AL. Nought upon this earth shall hinder me. Sire, I came hither to conquer or to die, and death or conquest only will I welcome.

KING. Take, then, the fruit of thy daring. Gaston, why turnest thou away?

GAS. Good my liege, I pr'ythee match me more suitably. Doom me not to combat against one so lightly armed, so young, so raw, so unpractised—a page rather than a knight! There's dishonour in the very thought. I never saw a paltry leveret in my gazehound's mouth but I snatched away the trembler; and shall I put forth my strength and skill against a boy? Go to, youth! I will not fight thee!

AL. Think not to escape me, Baron de Blondeville! Come on, slave! coward! murderer! Murderer of Reginald de Tolville, come on! I am his son!

[*Raising his vizor.*

KING. Albert, the Minstrel!

AL. I have good proof of what I say, my liege. Demand of Father Austen!—seek of Queen Eleanor!—see on my wrist the mulberry stain! I fight to regain my heritage, to

avenge my parents, to rescue the brave Woodreeve, to win the peerless Isabel! Come on, De Blondeville! come on!

HUNT. Hold, youth, a moment!

ARCH. Nay, my Lord of Huntingdon, strive not to let or hinder the gallant boy! I am a man of peace, but this is Heaven's own battle. Son of a noble father, helper of the helpless, speed thee to the combat! This victory is not to the strong of arm, but to the pure in heart. Let Heaven decide the right!

KING. So be it! Sound trumpets. (*The Trumpets are sounded.*) Forward, champions!

GAS. Now then, impostor, to thy death!

[*They fight, and* ALBERT'S *sword breaks.*

PIERCE. The boy is disarmed! All's lost! all's lost!

[*The Spectre appears;* GASTON *falls, and drops his Sword;* ALBERT *catches it, and stabs him to the heart.*

AL. Die, murderer, die!

[WOODREEVE *and* ISABEL *rush to* ALBERT, *and the Curtain falls.*

OTTO OF WITTELSBACH:

A TRAGEDY.

In Five Acts.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The Emperor Philip of Suabia.
Leopold of Brunswick.
Otto of Wittelsbach, Count Palatine of Bavaria.
Ulric, Otto's Son: a Boy.
Calheim.
Isidore.
Ardenberg.
Hugo.
Egbert.
Alf.
Rudolf.
Herman.
Conrad.

Vintagers, Citizens, Nobles, Archers, Electors, Heralds, &c.

Adela
Helen } *Philip's Daughters.*
Ida of Wittelsbach.
Beatrice.

Ladies, Vintagers, &c.

The Scene is in the City of Spires, the Castle of Wittelsbach, and the Rocks near the Rhine. Date, the early part of the Thirteenth Century.

OTTO OF WITTELSBACH.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Splendid Hall in the EMPEROR PHILIP'S *Palace at Spires.*

A Throne, or Chair of State, at the Back of the Stage.

Enter EGBERT OF WOLFENSTEIN *to* COUNT ARDENBERG, HUGO, ISIDORE, *and other Courtiers. Nobles, Pages, &c., continue to flock in during the early part of the Scene.*

EG. A fair good morrow, Ardenberg!

ARDEN. Sir Egbert
A truant from the chase! No common cause
Brings thee from Wolfenstein to Philip's Court,
In such rare weather, too! If my poor aid—

EG. How may I see the Emperor?

ARDEN. He gives audience,
At noon, in this fair hall.

ISI. The time is near;
Yon flock of punctual courtiers points the hour
True as the dial.

EG. I'll wait him here. What news?
How goes this wasting war? Claims Brunswick still

The imperial sceptre? or have our bold veterans
Driven the usurper from the field?

ARDEN. Why, since
Count Otto's crowning victory at Kanau—
Thou'st heard of Kanau's fight?

EG. Ay; would 't had graced
Some other leader!

ARDEN. Well! since then the war
Is at a pause; a lull in the wild storm
That rends the nations; and Duke Leopold,
Vanquished and humbled, from a hated foe
May turn an honoured friend.

HUGO. That prophecy
May be fulfilled i' th' instant. Sir, 'tis whispered
'Midst your Court pages here, that Charles of Calheim
Is in the city, sent on embassy
From Brunswick's leaguer.

EG. And his conqueror,
The fiery Otto? Knoweth any man
Where that proud chief abideth?

ISI. He's in Spires.
Scarce half an hour agone, I saw him dart
Through the south gate, swift as a flash of light,
His panting train a league behind, careering
Along the crowded street with the hot speed
Which clears the ground before him at the joust
Or in the battle. The scared market folk
Fled from their stalls; prim mincing damsels drew
Under the eaves for shelter; screaming children
Ran in the way for fear.

HUGO. And he?

ISI. He passed
Unheeding, till three portly citizens,
(I' faith, it was a service of some peril,)
Caught by the bridle rein the mettled steed,

Enforcing thus the chafing rider's stay
To listen to their suit. Impatiently,
At first, he hearkened; but the honest kindness
Of his frank nature mastered his brief wrath,
And in discourse as eager as his pace
I left him.

ARDEN. Hot his speed who comes to claim
A royal bride.

EG. The tidings then were true;
Count Otto weds the Princess? I could scarce
Believe the baleful story! She's the guerdon
Of Kanau's victory.

ISI. Of a hundred victories
Is she the guerdon, of the Imperial crown,
Of love and zeal, and faith and loyalty,
Which the Imperial crown would scantly pay.

ARDEN. This youthful heat becomes a youthful knight,
Topful himself of loving zeal; but we,
Elder and cooler servants of that crown,
Though not less faithful, we may view with dread
A reckless soldier, hot and turbulent,
Who, lance in rest, would sweep like some rude whirl-
wind
Throughout a peaceful realm, so near the throne
Of our great master. He is dangerous
To us and to the State.

EG. Mine errand here
Brings proof to enforce thy fears. I seek redress
From the good Emperor for injury
And insult, wrongful deed and scornful word
Of the Count Palatine.

ARDEN. Speak boldly, man.
Save yon old warrior and this hasty boy,
Vowed, as they say, to his young daughter Ida,
No friend hath he in Spires. Speak boldly, Sir!

Even Philip's self—
Isi. The Emperor!

Enter PHILIP, *on one side, attended; meeting, on the other,* ADELA, HELEN, *and other Ladies.*

PHILIP. Gentle dames,
Gentle as fair! and ye assembled peers
Of the holy Roman Empire, gathered round
The throne Imperial, in war its bulwarks,
In peace its ornaments, I greet ye well,
Princes, and knights, and peers! A brighter hour
Ne'er shone upon our meeting. We expect
The ambassador of Leopold, Count Calheim,
With such submission as two princely foes
May, in all honour, proffer and receive.
Sir Egbert, thou, too, here!—our noble host
Of Wolfenstein! We lack but Otto now
To crown our feast. Thy blushes, Adela,
Reflect that wish. Egbert, how fares the chase
In the old forests of thy new demesne,
In woody Brehna? When, upon the death
Of good Sir Rudiger, thou sought'st of us
That sylvan fief, we deemed thee fixed for life
In one eternal boar-hunt, like a figure
Woven in tapestry.
EG. Truly, my liege,
My hounds—and none are stancher—never drove
A beast of chase from the covert with more fury
Than they and I, and all that I call mine,
Have been from Brehna driven by Count Otto.
PHILIP. Thrust forth from Brehna!
ADE. Rest thee sure, Sir Knight,
He hath good reason for this seeming wrong.
Prejudge him not, dear father!

Enter OTTO.

Ah, he comes!
Father!

PHILIP. Well, well! Our first word must be thanks
To our thrice-valiant chief. An Empire's thanks
Are thine, Count Otto.

OTTO. Keep that honouring word
For painful services. To lead an army
Of such bold hearts, where the very horse-boys fought
Like belted knights; to feel the rapturous thrill
Of battle, the fierce throb of victory
In the cause of faith and honour—in thy cause,
My liege; why 'tis a duty overpaid
A thousand-fold in the acting. Spare all thanks,
Save the shy glance which maiden modesty
Lets fall through her veiled lids. My Adela,
Thy prayers were with us in the combat?

ADE. Yes;
In very truth they were.

OTTO. Now blessings rest
Upon the rosy lips that scorn to dally
With honest love! Who would not fight for thee,
Live for thee, die for thee, frank-hearted maid!

EG. My Lord and Emperor—

OTTO. Ha! Art thou there,
Despoiler of the orphan? When I chased thee,
I and my 'squire, and some three men-at-arms,
With thy vast hunting train, a score or two
Of lusty grooms, from Brehna, by St. Ottocar,
I little dreamt that we should meet again!

PHILIP. He comes, o'er justly as we fear, to 'plain
Of that mad feat, good Otto. He craved of us,
When hawking with him late at Wolfenstein,
Our Hold of Brehna, an Imperial fief

Lapsed by the death of bold Sir Rudiger;
And we—

OTTO. My liege, it was not thine to give,
That Hold of Brehna. An Imperial fief!
'Tis held, as his or mine, from sire to son,
On personal service in the field; a knight's
Good service to the Empire. Craved of thee!
Thou might'st as well give to the first that asked
The lands of Wolfenstein or Wittelsbach,
Ay, and the County Palatine to boot,
As Brehna! An Imperial fief! 'Tis held
From heir to heir on the old feudal tenure
Of service in the field; and he knew well,
At cost of one poor question all had known,
That good Sir Rudiger, when he fell in the front
Of battle, bravely striving, left a son,
A toward boy. His weeping mother brought him
For shelter to my halls. I left him, Sire,
Lord of his father's towers; and my good arm
Shall keep him there. Forget not that, Sir Falconer!
I will maintain his rights against the world.
Nay, change the huntsman's boar-spear and his knife
For knightly weapons, and I'll match the boy,
Young Rudiger, against thee, lance to lance.
Back to thy hawks and hounds! More honest one,
More brave the other!

PHILIP. If there be a son—
Yet still respect should wait a monarch's word.
Thou art too sudden, Otto.

ARDEN. Why not seek
Justice by softer paths? Why seize by force
Of arms a peaceful castle? lending thus
The perilous sanction of a leader's name
To the rude soldier's rudest violence!
Have we not laws to right all wrongs, redress

All injuries, relieve--

OTTO. Count Ardenberg,
Law should sustain the weak; but when the strong
Contend against them—Ye remember, Alf,
The jolly host of the Golden Stag at Lutz?
A pleasant knave! He had the twinkling glance,
The arch half-smile that preface well a jest,
A hearty ringing voice, a chuckling laugh,
And a right merry heart. Page, squire, and knight,
All loved to waste an hour, and empt a flask
With Alf at the Golden Stag! The hostel flourished.
He bought a little vineyard, and he rode
A gallant steed. Poor Alf! his bonny grey
Cost him full dear.

PHILIP. How so?

OTTO. A neighbouring lord,
Whose broad lands girdled round his humble home—
No soldier, as thou know'st, Count Ardenberg,
But a grave statesman—saw and coveted
The favourite steed. The merry host said No!—
He would have said him No had Philip sought
To buy that steed!—and then, thou know'st, not I,
Count Ardenberg, how, in the mask of law,
The reverend vizard black Oppression dons
When she would crush the feeble, Alf was chased
From his trim vineyard, his snug hostelry,
To rove a squalid beggar through our streets,
Whilst thou bestrid'st at ease the gallant grey.
I saw him but to-day. By Heaven! I'd rather
Roam the wide world that broken-hearted man,
Than fill his tyrant's seat at princely feasts
Or high Imperial councils.

PHILIP. Peace awhile!
Restrain these bitter scoffs. A loftier theme
Demands our care.

OTTO. And mine. I had well-nigh
Forgot my clients. Sire, the citizens
Of the Free Towns seek, at your Grace's hands,
Redress of multitudinous wrongs: tolls, imposts,
Exactions, and abuses infinite.
(*Giving papers.*) There be the scrolls. They say their substance flows
Into thy coffers, lavished upon gauds
Vain and effeminate, gems, banquets, shows,
Processions, pageants, toys that babbling woman
Or prattling childhood revels in, not man.
I warn thee, Sire, look to it. These free burghers,
As sound and generous as their Rhenish wines,
Like them are somewhat rough. They will have justice,
Ay, and they shall.

ARDEN. Shall!

OTTO. Shall, Count Ardenberg.
I have pledged my knightly word; they shall have justice.

PHILIP. (*Seats himself on the Throne.*) Admit the Ambassador. We'll talk hereafter
Of these Imperial towns.

Enter COUNT CALHEIM, *attended.*

My Lord of Calheim,
A joyful welcome! Gladly have we hailed
To-day our own great captain, bearing victory
Upon his conquering helm; and gladlier still
Greet we the valiant foe who heralds peace,
Fair daughter of a rugged sire. What says
The princely Leopold?

CAL. (*Giving letters.*) May't please your Grace,
Peruse these missives?

OTTO. (*At the front, to* HUGO *and* ISIDORE.) Peace!

HUGO. And wherefore not?

OTTO. So, so! A peace!

HUGO. Ay, good my lord. Why fought ye
Unless for such an end? Say, is not peace—

OTTO. The central point of the target, sir! The ring
Of the joust! The crown of victory! I can read
As shrewd a descant in the praise of peace,
Rough warrior though I be, as e'er a courtier
That lines your halls, so that the white-robed maid
Walk hand in hand with honour. Good Sir Hugo
The messenger who bears this olive token
Hath more of the raven than the dove.

HUGO. Thou know'st him?

ISI. He was amongst the followers of Leopold
Who fled before us in the Kanau fight.

OTTO. I love a brave foe next to a brave friend;
And in that fight full many an honoured crest
Vailed to our happier fortune. But yon minion!
Look, how the ready lip wreathes into smiles!
The pliant neck curves into courtly bows!
Can the slave stand erect? That ever man,
Born to look upward to the starry sky,
To front the sun at noon, should crouch before
Man's work, a tinsel throne! Take heed, good Philip!
The cur that fawns can bite; yet 'tis the slaver
That hides the venom.
(*To* ADELA, *who with* HELEN *has advanced to the front of the Stage.*) Fairest Adela!
Methinks these silken courtiers come to shame
Thy ragged knight. If any jibe thee, lady,
For thy rude bridegroom's sake, tell them his mirror
Hath been his burnished shield; the flapping tent
His 'tiring chamber. Yet i' faith he'll love thee
Better than they who come full prankt to woo.
Thanks for that honest smile.

PHILIP. (*Advancing to the front of the Stage.*) We'll speak
at leisure

Of these thy missives, Count; they ask some pause.
Meanwhile here be two peaceful maids to hail
The Herald of fair Peace, and one bold knight
To yield thee knightly greetings. Know'st thou not
The brave Count Palatine?

CAL. Never, till now,
Saw I that pride of chivalry.

PHILIP. Good Otto,
Count Charles of Calheim greets thee.

OTTO. (*To* ADELA.) Didst thou ask
Of Ida, sweet one?

PHILIP. Count of Wittelsbach,
The Ambassador of Brunswick proffers thee
His hand in knightly amity.

OTTO. (*To* ADELA.) I left her
Decking the bridal chamber.

PHILIP. So! this passes
Thy accustomed licence, Otto. Even from thee,
A noble stranger—

OTTO. Sire, I know him well.
We have met before.

PHILIP. Where?

OTTO. In the battle field.
Wast thou not at the fight of Kanau?

CAL. Ay;
But saw thee not.

OTTO. Wast there, and saw not me!
Why, Sire, the blessed sun shone down upon us
In summer's fervid pride; a shining sight
Of plunging steeds, with stern, brief glimpse of knights
Smiting, and banners waving, 'mid the clang
Of arms and battle-cries, and dying groans,
And the loud trumpet peal. Say, am I wont
To hide in such a field?

PHILIP. No more of this.

The victor turned a braggart!

ISI. Even now,
With generous fervour, Otto, didst thou swear
A nobler foe ne'er graced a triumph.

OTTO. Never
Was conquest dearer won. My homely speech
Lacks words to grace their valour. Yet amongst
The many brave, and showing the more base,
'Mid that chivalrous band, a dusky stain
Upon a snow-white shield, one craven lurked.
'Twas a gay knight (Count Calheim may perchance
Know the foul bird by the bright plumage), 'twas
A coxcomb of the field, in damasked mail,
Of such a hue as is the azure stripe
Of the adder's slimy side. Blue was his scarf,
And blue his waving plume.—Faugh! change thy colours,
Good Count, I pr'ythee!—Vainly o'er the plain
I chased the recreant; vainly challenged him
To meet me front to front. The coward fled.

PHILIP. What means this idle tale? My Lord of Calheim,
We must have tournaments and joustings, sports
That mimic war, to reconcile to peace
Our warlike knights. Thou art famous at the Ring.
We heard thy feats at Worms.

CAL. Dare I inquire
How fares the lovely Ida, whose bright eyes
Inspired the victor in the tourney game?

PHILIP. Ay, this we heard too. Otto, thy fair daughter
Hath won a noble wooer. Shall we plead
Your cause, Sir knight?

CAL. So please your Grace.

OTTO. Nay, spare
Your pleadings, good my liege. She is betrothed

To a brave knight;—Fear nothing, Isidore!
She is betrothed; and were she not, she ne'er
Should mate with Charles of Calheim. Ha! dost frown?
Why so thou shouldst have knit thy brows at Kanau,
When I cried to thee, "Turn, blue knight! Turn! turn!"

CAL. (*Aside.*) Otto of Wittelsbach, my hour is near!

OTTO. Farewell, sweet Adela! When next I come,
I go not hence alone. Farewell, dear maid!
Sir Hugo! Isidore! Forget not, Sire,
The citizens of the Free Towns! They shall
(*Going.*) Have justice.

ADE. Otto, speak in gentler mood
To my dear father. He too bends his brow.
For my sake, noble Otto!

OTTO. (*Approaching the Emperor.*) We are friends?
I lack the skill to sweeten truth's rough draught,
But still its power is mighty. Good my liege,
Truth is the pebble from the stripling's sling
That smites the giant to the earth; the bolt
Of the mountain shepherd's bow that cleaves the crest
Of the eagle, lord of air. Resist it not.
Match not my love with theirs. I was the firm
And loyal friend of Suabia's petty Duke:
They crouch before the Emperor. Beware
The fawning flatterers! And remember, Sire,
The burghers shall be tree! [*Exit.*

ISI. (*To* HUGO.) Oh, valiant fool!
Too honest for a Court. To strike his lance
Amidst a nest of slumbering serpents, tossing
The coiling worms about, as though their fangs
Distilled no poison. Rash as brave!

ADE. Dear father,
Thy brow is louring still.

PHILIP. We would be busy.

We'll join ye in the banquet-room. Lead forth
The Princess, good Sir Isidore.

[*Exeunt* ADELA *and* HELEN, *led by* ISIDORE *and* HUGO, *and followed by Ladies, Pages, &c.*

My lord,
Charge not upon us the discourteous scoffs
Of the Count Palatine. Thou seest his mood.
Ourself he spares not.

CAL. We have found him long
A dangerous foe, my liege; I hold him now
A doubly dangerous friend. Thou art the man
Whom he most injures. Why, to reign beneath
This hot and haughty warrior; to fill
The Imperial throne, his Viceroy; bear the ensigns
And symbols of authority, the crown,
The sceptre, and have none, not half the power
Of a feudal baron in his small demesne;
And to be taunted day by day with service
Done to the Duke of Suabia; cribbed and cabined
In the strait limits of another's will:—
Better be a serf at once than a crowned slave,
Whose fetters clink under his ermine. Fie!
Shake off the chains, my liege! Be free!

ARDEN. The Ambassador
Says well.

EG. Ay, truly, Sire!

CAL. Nobles, I bring
Proposals from the princely Leopold
To abandon his great claims; to yield the Empire;
Swear fealty to Philip; render homage
As Brunswick's Duke; so that bright Adela
Return with him to his ancestral halls
Fair Brunswick's Duchess. Full of loyal faith
In his most noble foe, to-night he comes
To woo his gentle bride.

PHILIP. Nay, Calheim! nay!
My word is pledged—And yet a monarch's vow,
His first and holiest vow is to the land
O'er which he sits enthroned. Say, should we yield
To Brunswick's prayer, how may we pacify
The hot and haughty spirit whose fierce wrath
Will shake the realm from north to south? How soothe him?
Helen is promised to Bavaria's Duke,
His kinsman We must pause on this. My lords,
We bid ye to the banquet. We'll discourse
Anon on this high matter.

[*Exit, followed by* ARDENBERG, EGBERT, *&c.*

CAL. (*Going off.*) Thou art mine!
Now for revenge, Count Otto! [*Exit.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Park or Chase in front of the Castle of Wittelsbach. Drawbridge, Porcullis, &c. Evening.

OTTO, ULRIC, *and* IDA.

OTTO. And so I scared thee yestereve. No dove,
Brooding upon her nest, when her nice instinct
Warns her that 'tis the hawk her enemy
That hovers in mid-air, was e'er more startled
Than thou at sight of me. Poor chuck! poor chuck!

IDA. Thou art so sudden, father. The keen lance
Hurled by the tawny warriors of the East;
Or arrow twanging from our northern bow;
Or swifter elements; the light; the wind;
Brisk meteors shooting o'er the autumnal heaven;
Stars that in winter fall, or seem to fall;
Quick summer lightning; shardly match thy speed!
Here, there, and back again, ere we can say
He's gone! And hadst thou in good sooth, dear father,
Been at the Imperial Court?

OTTO. Seek of them there.
I' faith there be some birds, not doves, mine Ida,
In that great gilded cage, who have fair cause

To wish my spirit slower. I'll not vex
My happy home with thought of the foul brood.
How fares the loom, my pretty broideress? How
The bow, my little man-at-arms? I found ye
Busied as though some fay had wrought strange change
Of sex and mood; thou, Ulric, gently tending
A gentle bird—

IDA. His peacock! thine own gift!
Why, belted knights swear by the peacock, father!

OTTO. Ay, 'tis a princely bird! the very type
Of lofty chivalry! But thou, fair maid,
Of thine own shadow fearful, what mad'st thou,
I' th' midst of the court, caressing with bold hand
A fiery war-horse, patting his arched neck,
And playing with his streaming mane? Was that
For love of me, fair daughter? The good steed
Was none of mine, I trow.

UL. 'Twas Lancelot,
Isidore's steed! the good steed Lancelot—
Look how she blushes!—hurt in the great fight,
And left behind for cure. Look! look! Her cheeks
Wax red as ever rose.

OTTO. An imp like thee
To scan a lady's blushes! She asked nought
Of Isidore. Suppose I told her, Ulric,
Of a new wooer, in whose cause the Emperor
Himself vouchsafed to plead? A wealthy suitor,
And noble, forasmuch as long descent
And kingly grants may make man noble.

UL. Well?
Thou saidst him No, dear father, didst thou not?
Thou didst. Sir Isidore is a brave knight,
And Ida loves him. I am sure he said
The Emperor No, sweet sister!

IDA. Precious child!

UL. Tell her thou didst, dear father. I'm to be
The page of bold Sir Isidore, so soon
As I can rein his good steed Lancelot
And wield my grandsire's brand. As for the bow—
Look at the top of yonder oak: thou seest
A raven's nest, and—No! come nearer here!
Yon bough is in the way; and thou'rt so tall!
So! So!—A nest with a broad arrow through it!
Dost see the shaft?

OTTO. The nest, but not the shaft.
The sun is in mine eyes. Yes, now I see
The arrow. Well?

UL. I lodged that arrow there
From Rudiger's cross-bow; the bow he gave me
At parting.

OTTO. Thou!

IDA. In very truth he did.

OTTO. Thou bend that stiff cross-bow! and to such height
Whirl thy true bolt! Go fetch the bow. I'll see thee
Shoot on the instant.

Enter ISIDORE.

Isidore, thy name
Was on these children's lips and in their hearts.
One boldly spake of thee; and one looked down,
And sighed, and smiled, and listened blushingly.
I did say No to that same suit thou wotst of,
Mine Ida. Bless ye all. What brings thee hither?

ISI. Thy gracious welcome, and the mute assent
Of these sweet conscious blushes, good my lord,
Might bring a man from Africk. But I come
On a strange message.

IDA. We'll go fetch thy bow.
Sir Isidore shall see thee shoot.

ISI. Return

Anon I pr'ythee. [*Exeunt* IDA *and* ULRIC.

OTTO. Now, thine errand?

ISI. Sir,

I am sent to bid thee hasten with thy power
To the Bohemian frontier, where, they say,
The foe is gathering fast.

OTTO. The foe! what foe?
Not the Bohemian! I would pledge my faith
For his; and Brunswick treats with them even now.
What mean they by the foe? Why, Ardenberg
Knows that Bohemia, granting she were false,
As I believe her true, could never fight us.
Treasure she lacks and men.

ISI. Dost thou not trace
Count Calheim's subtle dealing in this missive?

OTTO. Small trust put I in him. Were not their force
Utterly broke and scattered o'er the land,
So that they cannot make a head again,
I might, like thee, suspect it was an engine
To rid them of our armies.

ISI. Not our armies,
But their great leader; 'tis of him they seek
To rid themselves. I am not of their counsel,
Their dark and crooked counsel, but men say
That Calheim for his master seeks a bride
At Philip's Court; fair Adela.

OTTO. My Adela!
Tush! She's betrothed to me! They dare not, Sir;
No, nor they would not.

ISI. They may proffer thee
Young Helen.

OTTO. Why, her hand is promised too,
To Lewis of Bavaria.

ISI. They'll not grudge
A double treachery.

OTTO. 'Twould avail them nought.
Sir Isidore, I'm past the age when boys
Pine, sigh, and languish for a fair maid's love;
Yet not so old but I may exercise
Man's proud prerogative, to choose his mate.
And Adela—I tell thee that my tongue
Stumbles at every sound save Adela.
Her name to me is as a household word,
Mixed with the dear, familiar thoughts of home,
Of my fair Ida, of my little Ulric,
Of my old faithful squire. She'd love them all,
Even my rude warlike castle. There's a panel
Vacant in the great gallery, close beside
My noble mother's picture: I have thought
A thousand times how fitly Adela
Would fill that honoured place.

ISI. Yet Helen's eye
Is bright as Adela's, her cheek as fair.

OTTO. Mark me, young Sir: To me that cheek is fair
Whose blushes own my presence; bright to me
The eye whose modest glances frankly meet
And interchange with mine. I am no braggart,
To boast of ladies' favours, yet I've seen
When Adela hath dropped her golden thread
In fixed attention to some warlike tale
From these rude lips; have felt the tremulous touch
Of her slight hand thrill through my gauntlet mail
When she hath given the tourney prize. No more!
Thou'lt think me next as vain a popinjay
As yonder thing of silk. Besides, I'd wager
My life on Philip's truth.

ISI. Yet arm thyself
With caution.

OTTO. Arm myself against my friend!
Sit clothed in mail at the banquet! Wear unsheathed

My dagger on the social hearth! Boy! boy!
I'd rather die, here as I stand, Faith's martyr,
Than live to the age of man the jealous slave
Of base suspicion. Hearken, Isidore!
I know thou mean'st me kindly; 'tis thy care,
And love for me, that make thee somewhat wrong
Him to whom both owe fealty. I'll prove,
Not in doubt, mark me, but in loyal trust,
How vain and false thy fears. The sun is low,
But we have rid together many a night
Through foaming flood and trackless snow. We'll straight
To Spires. I'll wed the gentle Adela
Ere noon to-morrow.

ISI. So she be not wedded
To Brunswick's Duke already.

OTTO. Pshaw! 'Twill save
A world of idle pomp and dull delay,
Nor waste an instant should this nameless foe,
Threaten our frontier. Ere my bands, dispersed
Since Kanau's field, can gather round the banner,
The lion banner which their lion hearts
Bear on to victory, I shall be here
To head them.

Re-enter IDA *and* ULRIC, *with Bow and Arrows.*

Ah! not now, dear boy! not now!
We must away to Spires. Ida can tell thee
If Lancelot be fit to bear thee, Isidore,
She hath been his faithful nurse. When next ye hear
The horn that startled ye, 'twill herald, dear ones,
Me and my gentle bride. To horse! to horse.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Street in Spires. The Houses decorated with Boughs and Garlands; Tapestry, &c., hanging from the Casements. Ringing of Bells continued during the whole Scene, and Music heard during the Procession, and more faintly before and after.

ALF, *and several Citizens.*

FIRST CIT. Alf, thou art brave to-day! Hast cast aside
Thy scrip?

ALF. Thanks to the good Count Palatine,
I've left the beggar's wretched trade. But ye
Are decked as for a holiday; the streets, too,
Are rife with gay and busy folk; proud steeds,
Held by fair pages, prancing at each door;
The casements all alive with simpering maids;
The houses covered with rich cloth of gold,
Or richer tapestry; o'er every porch
Garlands, and boughs, and streamers. What hath chanced?

SEC. CIT. Small need to ask! Do not the merry bells
Ring in thine ears the tidings? The loud peal
Of trump and cornet, tell they not a tale
Of royal nuptials? The fair Adela—

ALF. Weds not to-day. The Count of Wittelsbach
Is at his Castle.

FIRST CIT. The Saints keep him there,
Or storms will cloud this sunshine. 'Tis Duke Leopold
Who weds the Princess.

ALF. Leopold! Tush! tush!
Why, she's affianced to Count Otto. Be they
Turned fools as well as traitors? Leave a friend,
And such a friend, for such an enemy!

The victor for the vanquished! Tush!

FIRST CIT. They come:
Mark thou who leads the bride.

[*A Splendid Procession, consisting of* PHILIP, LEOPOLD, ARDENBERG, HUGO, ADELA, HELEN, *Knights, Pages, Ladies, Guards, &c., passes over the Stage to the sound of Music, and ringing of Bells.—The Citizens toss up their caps.*

SEC. CIT. Now, Alf, were we not right?

ALF. The whole world's wrong,
From Emperor to beggar, treacherous, false,
Ungrateful, cowardly! Ye, who stood there
Tossing your caps in air,—the cornets drowned
Your slavish voices,—in the selfsame place,
Two days agone, ye flung those very caps
Aloft, and rent the skies with deafening shouts,
In honour of Count Otto!

FIRST CIT. A braver chief
Ne'er breathed than the Count Palatine. So far
I grant thee. But we homely citizens
Were best not meddle with these great ones. She
Was sad and shivering.

SEC. CIT. Ay, a pallid bride!

ALF. She loves him still.

Enter OTTO *and* ISIDORE.

OTTO. Alf! Why, thou look'st once more
A goodly host; we'll find thee speedily
A goodly hostel, man. Meanwhile, go buy
A steed, and follow us, not to the wars,
But home to Wittelsbach. Cheer up! Cheer up!
I will not have thee sad. What music's that?
The far-off music, faintlier heard and faintlier,
Dying away even as I speak! And what
Those bells that louder peal and louder? What

May those sounds mean?

ALF. My lord—I cannot say it—
I cannot frame my speech to tell their treachery—

OTTO. Wilt thou not answer?

ALF. 'Tis the bridal, Sir,
Of Leopold and Adela.

OTTO. Thou liest!
By Heaven, I'd not believe my father's spirit,
Though he came from the grave to tell me that base tale!

ISI. Poor Alf's no liar. See how thou hast grieved
The faithful wretch.

OTTO. Nay vex not, man! We know
Thy truth. But there's a lie, a cankered lie,
A rancorous, poisonous lie, that taints the air
We breathe, floating around us. Thou hast inhaled
The venom. Wed my Adela! Thou knewst not—
How shouldst thou know?—the royal maids. Young Helen,
She is the bride! I'd wager my broad lands
Against yon withered leaf,—They who strew roses
May look to find the thorns! I'd wager, Sir,
The County Palatine, if bride there be
'Tis Helen. Adela! My Adela!
They could not, would not, durst not. 'Tis young Helen.
But I'll be there.

ALF. And I. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The Interior of the Cathedral at Spires. The High Altar decorated in the Background. Priests, &c., ranged around it. The Stage nearly full of Nobles, Ladies, Pages, &c.

PHILIP, *leading* ADELA, *approaches from a Door at the side, followed by* LEOPOLD, HELEN, CALHEIM, ARDENBERG, HUGO, *&c.*

PHILIP. Stand from before the altar, noble lords,
And high-born dames, and blooming damsels! Leave

Free passage for the bride. My Adela,
For the last time thy father calls thee his;
I yield thee to a tenderer duty now,
My duteous child. The princely Leopold,
Howbeit his wooing hath been brief, will prove
No less a noble husband. Thou wilt live
To bless the hour that rescued thy fresh youth
From a rough warrior, loud and turbulent,
And old as I myself, to match thee, sweet,
With one in the flush of manhood's blooming prime,
Who with calm sweetness tempers dignity.
Thou'lt live to bless this union.

LEO. Good my liege,
To the fulfilment of that prophecy
My life shall be devoted. This fair hand
Trembles with modesty.

ADE. Trembles with fear,
With sad reluctance, with deep dread of wrong,
With dark forebodings. Sir, this hand is pledged
To one as noble as thyself. I love him
With such a love as a chaste maiden owes
To her affianced lord. Wilt wed me now?
Oh no! Thou art too proud, too generous,
Too wise, to take a hand without a heart,
A cold, unwilling hand.

PHILIP. Peace! Thou wast best.
Where got'st thou this strange stubbornness? Art frenetic?

ADE. Father! thyself taught me to love Count Otto.
Fiery and rash! Why, 'tis the alloy of the gold
That fits the metal for its use. Thy foes
Have felt Count Otto's rashness, Rough and rude!
So be the gnarled oak, the towering elm,
Yet fearlessly the woodbine and the vine
Wreathe their light tendrils round each rugged trunk,
Supported and adorning.

PHILIP. Peace! bold girl!
Duke Leopold!
LEO. My liege, the general weal
No less than mine own fixed and rooted love
Demand this union. Sweet, if firmest faith
And fondest care and tenderest watchfulness
May win relenting smiles, I'll not despair.
I cannot yield thee, loveliest maid.
PHILIP. Lead on
To the altar.

Enter OTTO, *followed by* ISIDORE *and* ALF.

OTTO. By your leave, fair dames! What's here?
A bridal toward? Ay; the reverend fathers,
The simpering maidens, the pale trembling bride!
Tremble no longer; I am here to cheer
And guard thee, Adela! Duke Leopold!
Art thou to give the lady? I am ready.
Why hold ye back? Ye sent—albeit I missed
The messenger—ye sent to summon me;—
Did ye not send? or knew ye by sheer instinct,
The happy star, which still hath wafted me,
Unwitting how, to what I loved the best,
Feast, tourney, combat, victory? Trusted ye
To that fair star? or sent ye, Sirs? Speak! Speak!
Stand not thus mute, each gazing upon each!
Say, be ye met to celebrate my bridals?
Waited ye here for me the bridegroom? Speak!
Can they not utter Yes or No!
PHILIP. Good Otto—
OTTO. Alf, thou wast right. I cry thee mercy, Isidore!
PHILIP. Count Palatine—
OTTO. I know what thou wouldst say,
Ay, well I know the flimsy spider's web,
The thin, weak, flickering veil of gossamer,

Wherewith men shroud plain treachery.

PHILIP. Speak'st thou, Sir,
To us thy Sovereign?

OTTO. Sovereign! That one word
Proclaims to earth and Heaven the mighty sum
. Of thine ingratitude! Sovereign! Didst inherit
That title proud and resonant? Wast born
I' the purple? Swathed in ermine? Golden sceptres
Thy corals? Jewelled diadems the toys
Thy pampered childhood played withal? Hadst thou
The excuse that waits on princes, flattery-gorged
From the cradle upward? Wast thou such?

PHILIP. Count Otto,
We bear too long thy rebel speech.

OTTO. Or wast thou
Of the rarer race, whom patriot virtue lifts
To kingly heights, who lend an age its name,
A realm its glory? The great founders they
Of thrones Imperial. From their ashes bursts
The living fire, whose sacred halo plays
Round each heroic son's anointed brow,
To latest time. Giants who walk the earth
Rejoicing. Say, wast thou of them? or wast thou
That slightest, smallest of our pigmy race,
That dullest, commonest man, that poorest peer,
That weakliest tree of all our grove, whom I—
Fool, idiot, madman!—in disastrous hour
Bore on to Empire? Faugh! A puppet Emperor,
Hung upon wires! A king at chess, whose moves
Each subtle knave directs, each babbling jester
Scoffs at and scorns.

CAL. The Emperor Philip, meanst thou?
That Emperor upon whose head thy hand
Planted the laurel of the Cæsars? Philip,
Whose name hath been thy battle-cry, for whom

Thou didst array one half of this fair realm
Against their fellows, father against son,
Brother 'gainst brother. Mark how he turns round
Upon his idol, as the savage wreaks
His wrath upon the image of his hand,
And dashes on the stones his god of clay.

OTTO. Count Calheim, spare thy taunts. Philip is weak,
Ingrateful, perjured, base. But what is he,
That perjury's base prompter, who, a prince,
A knight, a man, stole hither i' the dark—
A wolf to the fold! O stain on knighthood's shield,
On manhood's brow!

ISI. Count Otto, calm thee.

PHILIP. Ay,
Calm thee, Count Otto. I have borne thy scoffs,
Remembering all thou deem'dst I had forgot
Of love and service, thy rash angry mood
Remembering too. Respect my princely guest.
His coolness shames thy fire. Thou a brave warrior,
Railing like some vexed shrew!

OTTO. I am too loud,
Too rash, too fiery hot. Duke Leopold,
Thou art of a noble strain. We have fought as friends
Together, side by side; and late as foes
Met i' the front of battle gallantly.
And now I challenge thee, as knight, as man,
To a fresh trial of nobleness. Grasp not,
As she stands before the altar decked and wreathed,
A victim for a bride. Are we not vowed
Defenders of her gentle sex, protectors
Of helpless innocence? Abide her choice;
And thou, Imperial Philip, let thy will
Wait upon hers; then if by duty swayed,
Or thy fresh youth, the royal maid incline

To wed thee, I, with frankest benison,
Will give her hand to thine. I have sworn. Swear thou
Obedience to her mandate! Kiss the blade!
Swear, Duke of Brunswick! Swear! Thou wilt not?
No?
Off to the greensward! Better likes me there
To win the dear one! Better loves my sword
To flash in the sun and air. To the greensward, ho!

LEO. Right willingly.

PHILIP. Sir Isidore, guard well
The gates. Close every entrance. Look that none
Pass forth.

ADE. Nay, nay; I am no brawler's prize.
Count Palatine, a father's stern command
Parts us for ever. I'll not break my vow
To wed an earthly Prince. The spouse of God,
A dedicated maid apart and pure,
In the dim cloister's sad repose, I'll pray
For peace on all. Back to thy happy home;
Vex not this holy fane with strife; stain not
The consecrated floor.

PHILIP. She shall be thine—
Take her.

OTTO. And wilt thou take her? Wilt thou seize
The victim, trusting to the sanctity
Of these old hallowed walls? Each place is holy
To the just purpose and the righteous cause.
Wilt yield her to me? to the cloister? No!
Saidst No? Off with ye! There must be but one
Survivor 'twixt us twain. I'll free thee, Sir,
From yonder coward's grasp. He'll not abide
The glance of my bright sword. Come on!

PHILIP. (*Rushing between them.*) Hold! hold!

LEO. The Emperor is slain!

ADE. Oh, father! father!

ISI. (*To* OTTO.) Away! Off with him, Alf! He's as one stunned
And stupefied. [ALF *leads* OTTO *off the stage.*
(*Advancing to the body.*) Art sure that he is dead?
Send for a leech.

ARDEN. So, lift him up! So! so!

CAL. Where is Count Otto? Where the murderer?

HUGO. Gone.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Castle of Wittelsbach; an Oriel Window, through which Towers and Turrets are visible; a practicable Door near the Window, which may be supposed to lead to one of the Turrets.

Enter IDA *to* ULRIC.

IDA. Ulric! Alone, dear boy? What so tricked out
In lace and tissue like an Emperor's page.
A dagger, too—a real dagger—sharp
As our good seneschal's, no blunted mockery.
So fine, and yet alone! Thou shouldst be prancing
Half o'er the Castle, showing thee to Gertrude
And Ermengarde, or sallying from the gates
To Margaret's cot, and bidding her admire
Her nursling's gay adornment. Still so sad!
Thou only lack'st a broidered purse. Take this,
And fix it in thy girdle—so, boy, so!—
What, not a smile? And this thy manlier gaud
Neglected too! Disclose the shining steel!
So weaponed, yet so sad!

UL. Tell me, sweet sister,
Why am I decked thus?

IDA. Lest our father come
Again afore his time. Whilst sluggish travellers
Count the brief hours against the weary leagues
And gravely say, so long to Wittelsbach,
He's here. And now he brings his gentle bride,
Whom we must welcome as a mother. Trust me,
She'll pay our greetings with a mother's love.

UL. Be sure she will not come to-day; or if
She come—

IDA. What then, Sir Prophet?

UL. An' thou jeer me,
I will not tell thee. Ida, hast thou faith
In dreams?

IDA. Ah, gentle boy, 'tis all too soon
For thee to hold such faith! When years shall bring
Quick teeming fancies to thy midnight couch,
Thoughts of shy fear compact, and shyer hope,
And flitting memories, less and less distinct
As slumber creeps upon thee; then should some
Blest vision show before thy sleeping eyes,
In vivid pageant, thy heart's waking wish,
Then turn believer, Ulric; not till then,
I warn thee.

UL. This is mockery. Thou know'st
My peacock?

IDA. Know him! There he sits i' th' sun,
Look, scattering, as he waves his glittering plumes,
Bright scintillating sparks of golden light,
Changeful and glorious; such a light as lives
On the wings of the rose-beetle. Radiant bird!
Look how he sits on yonder turret!

UL. Well!
Last night I dreamt that that proud stately bird,
My father's gift—meet emblem, as he said,
Of lofty chivalry—was, as he sate

On that same turret, sunning his bright plumes,
Pecked at and done to death by ravening crows
And shrieking vultures. I cried lustily,
Thy bower-women heard me, for my bow
And arrows—

IDA. But as still befalls in dreams,
They were not to be found. Is't so? A dream
Is but a fragment phantasm; the bright end
Of a rainbow painted on one lowering cloud
While the upper sky is clear.

UL. Nay, pr'ythee, listen.
The bow was found; but as I fixed the bolt,
The false string snapt, and the fair bird was slain
Before my eyes. I promise thee, I woke
Trembling with rage, and weeping.

IDA. Loving boy!

UL. And that's not all. Shooting this very day
At one of those vile crows, the bow-string broke
As in that dismal dream.

IDA. Yet there he sits
Unscathed, the knightly bird!

UL. And, Ida! Ida!
My lesson of this morning—Rest thee sure
Some evil will betide! The very task
I conned for Father Cyril— [*A horn is heard without.*

IDA. Hark! A horn!
My father! No! The sound is tremulous,
Wild, and unearthly. His quick spirit sends forth
A bold and stirring blast; keen as his war-cry,
Glad as his summons to the chase. Some sick
Or houseless wanderer passing near our towers—

Enter OTTO.

Himself! So pale, and staggering. Take his sword.
Thou art weary, father. Sit thee here.

UL. There's blood
Upon the blade. Hast been in battle, father?
Ay, that thou hast, like a good knight, and slain
Thy foe. Why looks he angrily upon me?
To slay in equal fight a stalwart foe
Is a right knightly deed.

IDA. Take hence the sword,
Dear Ulric, and bring wine. [*Exit* ULRIC.
Thou art pale, and faint,
And trembling, dearest father. Hath aught ill
Befallen the gentle Princess that thou com'st
Alone? Speak to me. Groan not thus. What grief
Can equal this wild fear! Speak to me. Tell me
Hath any wronged thee?

OTTO. Wronged me, girl! I found them—
I who, for Suabia's paltry coronet,
Placed the Imperial crown on Philip's brow,
Placed it and held it there, prop of his throne,
Champion and victor of a hundred fields!—
I found them wedding Adela, my Adela,
My own affianced bride, to Leopold,
Their enemy and mine.

IDA. Poor Adela!
And did she wed him?

OTTO. Wed him! I being by!
My good sword in my hand! Ida, there's blood
Upon that sword.

IDA. Count Calheim? Leopold?

OTTO. No; for he rushed between.

IDA. Whom wouldst thou say?
Who rushed between ye, father? Who?

OTTO. I did not
Think to have slain him, Ida.

IDA. Father! father!
Thou know'st what I would say! Thou seest the fear

That quivers in my heart! The Emperor?

OTTO. Why did he rush 'twixt my uplifted sword
And my armed foeman? He as well might seek
To check in its mid-flight the death-winged arrow,
To arrest in its swift path the thunderbolt,
As to stay my keen blade when raised to strike.
It was the will of Heaven, and I the blind
Unconscious instrument. Why should I grieve?
It was ordained above.

IDA. But is he dead?
Art sure that he is dead? Didst search the wound?

OTTO. Girl, my hand deals no second blow. I tell thee
He came between me and my enemy,
And as a silken scarf, a floating banner,
A garment delicate as thine, I cleft
The ermine. 'Twas the All-Righteous Power that nerved
My arm to smite him in his treachery.
Why weep'st thou, Ida? Change those pallid looks
And those reproachful tears for joyous smiles!
Say, "Thou hast done a noble deed, Count Otto!"
Be wiser than those dames whose puling fears
Trouble our homes.

Re-enter ULRIC, *with Wine.*

Ulric, my boy, be glad!
Laugh! laugh! How knew I where the uplifted blade
Would fall? Be merry.

UL. Ida, what hath chanced?
Is he not sick?

OTTO. Be merry! Let me hear
Laughter and jollity.

UL. He's angry, Ida.
Father!

OTTO. Ha! wine! Fill high, boy!

UL. 'Tis a flask

Of the rich Hungarian wine the Emperor sent thee.
Quaff to his health, dear father; to the Emperor;
Thine own dear Emperor, Philip; then another
To the fair Princess Adela.

IDA. He twists
The barbed arrow in the festering flesh.
Peace, Ulric!

UL. Hath the Emperor put on
The haughty master, and forgot to treat
Our father as his friend?

OTTO. Oh, I have slain
My friend and master, Ulric! slain the friend
Of twenty years, whom I have loved and served
Even as a brother. I, who saved his life
Thrice in the battle, who put down his foes,
Whose soul was pledged to his by services
He never could repay, the pledge that binds
Kind hearts to kinder deeds, and giving hands
To gifts more liberal—I, that was his all,
I, to have slain him! 'Tis as though the mother
Should stab the ailing child, that she had watched
By day and night, since the first feeble cry
Told that a child was born! I that was vowed
To him and to my country, not by words
Hollow and false, but deeds, pure shining deeds
That might have been writ i' th' sunbeams, might have stood
I' th' flood of light at noontide white and stainless,
Am black as midnight now. O God! O God!
That on a point of time so brief, that scarce,
The sand wags in the hour-glass hangs man's all,
Life, honour, name, and fame! I am tarnished now,
That was so bright. My sword is dim, my shield
Sullied.

IDA. Be comforted.

OTTO. Her father, too,
The true, the faithful! Hers!
UL. Full surely, Ida,
This Emperor did our father flagrant wrong;
He had not slain him else. Tell me the cause,
Sweet sister.
IDA. Brave and loving child! Who comes?

Enter ISIDORE.

ISI. Count Otto, rouse thee! Arm thyself, Count Otto!
Go head thy vassals; man thy walls; heave up
To the high battlements huge blocks of stone
To hurl upon the foe; heat mighty cauldrons
Of molten lead to pour upon their heads.
There's but a moment's pause 'twixt thee and fate,
And thou art dallying here! Rouse thee! He comes,
Leading the Imperial archers! Calheim comes,
And at his side Revenge. Mine Ida! Ulric!
IDA. O truest friend! But think on no one now
Save him.
ISI. Wake from this torpor of despair,
Count Otto! What! must I needs bid thee twice
Make ready for the combat? All's not lost!
Though Calheim come hate-quickened; Faith and Love
Were swifter. Thine old squire and Alf ere now
Have roused thy vassals. Up, and head their bands.
Manned by bold warriors, these strong towers may yet
Hold out 'gainst Calheim's power.
UL. They did hold out
In our good ancestor Count Berthold's time,
Five weeks 'gainst the Bohemians, without half
Our cause. Thou'lt see how every man will fight
For thee and Wittelsbach. Even I—Thou'lt see
That I can draw the cross-bow. Shall I call
The Seneschal?

OTTO. My child! Oh, what a joy
Had this been yesterday!

Enter SENESCHAL.

SEN. My lord, the vassals,
Armed as 'gainst present danger, throng the courts,
And wait your bidding.

OTTO. Hearken, Seneschal!
Dismiss the vassals straight; let down the drawbridge;
Raise the portcullis; open wide the gates;
And when an armèd foe shall come, as come
He will, and cry, "Yield men of Wittelsbach,"
Resist not; fight not; slay not; but submit.
Give ready entrance; lay aside your arms;
Yield peacefully. 'Tis a hard duty, Seneschal,
But 'tis thy master's last command! Farewell!
Farewell! [*Exit* SENESCHAL.

I, that am lord of these bold hearts,
I, that have led them in a hundred fields,
And now in mine own castle, and afore
My brave boy's face, to bid them veil their crests,
And lay their weapons down! It must be, shall be.
Blood weighs too heavy on my soul already;
I'll spill no more.

ISI. 'Twas the last chance of life.

OTTO. Say rather death prolonged and multiplied.
I'll wait him here.

IDA. Fly to the cave, dear father!
Thanks, Holy Mary, for that blessed thought!
Fly to the cave! There safety dwells, and hope
Unsullied by a crime.

ISI. Alas! dear maid!
Calheim approaches. None may quit these walls
Unnoted.

IDA. But a passage leads beneath

The walls. Count Otto knows it well, unknown
To all save him and them of his high line;—
The entrance is hard by, in yonder turret.
Ye might spend a day upon the winding stair
Ere ye could trace the groove, so quaint and cunning
The workmanship! Well! that dark passage leads,
After long windings, to a spacious cave,
All floored with silver sand, o'er which a spring,
A little sparkling spring wells ceaselessly,
And through the natural brushwood, leafy screen
That veils the cavern's mouth, goes dancing down
The deep ravine. The place is wild and rude;
Far from these towers, from human dwelling far,
Save Margaret's lonely cot.

ISI. The good old Margaret,
Ulric's fond faithful nurse, she to supply
Food until I can seek them there! Blest chance!
Fly! fly! we waste the hour!

OTTO. Was it thy voice
That counselled flight? Dost think me turned stark coward,
That thou, a knight, shouldst bid me flee, as calmly
As yon fond girl? Ulric, wouldst have thy father
Flee, like a craven recreant?

UL. No,

OTTO. My boy!
Hear how he shames thee! Have I not fronted Death
Oft in the battle?

ISI. Ay, in the battle, Death,
'Twixt Victory and Honour, stalks the field
Triumphant as a bridegroom. But when shame—

OTTO. I can abide it.

IDA. Oh, in mercy! Hark!
Is it the tread of distant steeds? or is it
My own heart beating? Fly, dear father!

OTTO. Peace!

ISI. How will thy proud and fiery temper bear
The slow procession through the hustling crowd;
The gaze of hate and scorn; the muttered curse,
Or shriller jest, drowning thy last low prayer?
And then the dismal scaffold; the grim headsman,
His horrid garments stiff with gore; his hands
Red from some recent butchery; he profaning,
With rough, unhallowed grip, thy free-born limbs;
Hacking the spurs of knighthood from thy heels;
Shivering above thy head thy stainless sword;
And trampling under foot the lion shield
Of thy great name. He would not need his axe.
Thy heart would break.

OTTO. Even that I can endure.

IDA. I hear them now. They come! they come! Oh, father,
Have pity on thy children! Fling not thus
Thy life away.

ISI. Nor wilt thou fall alone! Hast thou forgot
The cruel law which dooms sons, brethren, kinsfolk—

OTTO. The Ban! the Ban! My boy! A sword!

[*Horn without.*

ISI. There blows
Count Calheim's blast of vengeance.

IDA. Hasten, father!

OTTO. Bless thee, sweet child! Protect her, Isidore!
She may not share our perils. The Ban spares
Her innocent head. My boy! I'll save thee yet,
My valiant boy! [*Exeunt* OTTO *and* ULRIC.

IDA. Oh, why not take me with them!
Why leave me here, the prey of torturing fear,
Alone!

ISI. Am I not with thee?

IDA. Hark! Again,

Again that trumpet! Watch if they have gained
The turret. I am blind with scalding tears.
But thou may'st plainly view the winding stair
Through the barred loophole. If the door be locked—
I've known it so!—And Calheim must be close
Beneath the Castle wall. Dost see them?

ISI. No.

Yes, now they pass. There's Ulric's little hand,
His dagger in it. Now Count Otto's plume
Sweeps past the narrow opening. They are gone.

IDA. They're safe! They're safe! Thanks to All-righteous Heaven!

They've 'scaped the fell destroyer! I can meet him
With a firm heart.

SCENE II.

The Diet of the Empire. A Splendid Hall; a Throne and a Table before it, with Chairs.

LEOPOLD, PRINCES, ARDENBERG, HUGO, HERALD, *and Guards.* LEOPOLD *advances to the Throne during the first few lines, and seats himself upon it, whilst the Princes range themselves around the Table.* ARDENBERG *sitting on a Stool near the* EMPEROR, *as Minister or Secretary.* HUGO, *Heralds, Guards, &c., attending.*

LEO. Summoned once more to Empire, not a voice
Mute or dissentient, I obey your call,
Electors, Princes, Peers, and mount the throne,
Vacant by foulest treason. Clouds and shadows
Encanopy that throne; the Imperial robes,
Gory and gashed, fold round me like a shroud;
The laurelled crown, to dismal cypress turned,
Weighs on my weary brow a funeral wreath;

Shrill wailings echo round us; even the walls
Of this old Palace seem to cry aloud
For vengeance on the murderer. Pass we, Sirs,
At once to our great duty. Have ye cited
The regicide at sound of trumpet?

ARDEN. Sire,
Twice have the heralds, with hoarse loathing voice,
Proclaimed the name accurst. None answered.

LEO. Know ye
If Calheim have won home from—

Enter CALHEIM.

Ha! Hast brought
The traitor? or with bold and stubborn will
Defends he his strong castle?

CAL. Sire, we found
The drawbridge down; the gates unbarred; the grim
Portcullis raised; nor hand nor voice opposed
Our entrance. The old hoary Seneschal
Flung at our feet the keys; yet every court
Was filled with armed retainers, veterans
Who would have stood a six months' siege, and then
Vanquished an army. In stern silence they
Surveyed our power; rebellion in each look,
Treason in each fierce gesture.

LEO. And their chief?

CAL. Him found we not; nor the young boy his heir.
The Countess Ida, sole of that doomed House,
Lingered in Wittelsbach. I had ta'en order
To bring her in our ward; but, while we searched
From battlement to dungeon that huge pile,
The maiden fled.

LEO. Sound for the last time, Herald,
The trumpet peal; then, for the last time, summon
The regicide.

Trumpets. During the Proclamation, enter IDA.

HERALD. Otto of Wittelsbach! Traitor! Murderer!
For the last time we summon thee. Appear
To answer thy foul deeds! Appear! appear!

IDA. (*Advancing.*) Hold! nor condemn unheard! Lo! I
am here
To shield Count Otto's fame, to abide his doom.
Could he have heard that trumpet, his bold heart
Had sprung to meet the call.

LEO. Retire! retire!
Even this stern law spares woman's gentleness.
Retire!

IDA. I am his daughter. In my veins
Glows the high blood of Wittelsbach, his blood
Bravest of that brave race. Look ye to find
Meek fawns amid the lion's young, soft doves
Within the eagle's nest? Forgive these vaunts,
Misery's sad privilege. I do but claim
The holy right of nature, duty, love,
To fill his place, now at your judgment-seat,
To-morrow at the block. I know our doom.

LEO. Not thine, young maid.

IDA. Ye called him Murderer.

CAL. Did he not kill at noontide, in the face
Of God and man, before our very eyes,
Philip his Emperor?

IDA. Alas! he did.
But 'tis the intent that makes the crime; and he
No more designed to slay Imperial Philip
Than thou thyself; was of that fatal deed
Unconscious as his sword. The lightning flame,
When smiting prince or peasant, sentient man,
Or lifeless marble, knows as much as he
Whom it destroys. My liege, he thought to meet

An armèd foe in equal fight. His hand
Was raised to strike. Had I, his daughter, rushed
Between ye in that hour, deep in my breast
Had the keen blade been sheathed. Oh, that on me
The stroke had fallen! I had died blessing him.

CAL. Ay, in wild passion's stormy gust he had spared
Nor sex nor kin; had slain the new-born babe,
The bed-rid grandame, his whole race; had done
A score of murders in one burst of wrath.

IDA. Oh, who shall say to Passion's mountain wave,
"So far, no farther!" In this iron age,
Bold youth is trained to slaughter, fleshed in blood
As hawk or hound. As easy 'twere to stay
The falcon when she stoops upon the heron,
The gaze-hound with the stag in view, as man
With man, his prey, before him. War's your trade,
Glory your idol. Sword and spear are now
Your masters, not your slaves. Your very sports
Are combats. And Count Otto! He hath lived
I' the battle-field, hath passed from victory
To victory careering. His keen lance
Was diamond bright, bright as his fame; his shield
Stainless as his clear honour. Now—

CAL. Ay, now?

LEO. Pass we to judgment, lords!

IDA. Thanks, bounteous Heaven,
That he is far away! that I am here
To appease the law that cries out blood for blood
And life for life! Pronounce your doom on me,
I'll bear it firmly.

LEO. Lady, we war not
On women. Princes, we have heeded well
The daughter's plea. But at the altar's foot
The traitor raised his sacrilegious hand,
And Philip fell. The regicide escaped

Our archers; but the Ban—

IDA. The Ban! Oh, mercy!

ARDEN. Peace! Silence those wild screams!

LEO. How say ye, lords?
What is your sentence?

AN ELECTOR. Good my liege, the Ban!

OTHER ELECTORS. The Ban! The Ban!

LEO. Hear, then, the doom
Of the foul murderer. Be his castles razed
To the earth with sword and fire; his wealth confiscate;
His lands and lordships forfeited; his name
Held infamous for ever. Outlaw he
And excommunicate; he and his race
Sons, brethren, kinsmen, free to shaft and spear
As the vulture and the wolf. Whoe'er shall yield them
Food, shelter, raiment, dies. So shall they perish
In woods and wilds, and their unhallowed bones
Bleach in the wind and sun.

IDA. Sons! did he say?
Kindred!

CAL. Not thou.

IDA. I thought not of myself.
Sons! Must thou die, sweet brother!

LEO. Good Sir Hugo,
Look that the sentence be proclaimed throughout
The Empire. Calheim, be the duty thine
Of levelling to the dust the lofty towers
Of Wittelsbach. That done, pursue with sword
And spear the regicide.

IDA. Sons! Brethren! Kinsmen!
O cruel, cruel law! My pretty Ulric!
And they shall die who succour give, or food,
Or shelter! Saints and angels, hear my vow!
Weak, feeble, helpless though I be to tend thee
In thy sad wanderings; to follow thee

The wide world through in exile, penury, shame;
Cherish thee living, wait on thee in death;
Each thought of happier days, each dream of love,
Pure wedded love abandoning; throwing by,
As a silken robe, the high-born maiden's pride,
The timorous woman's fear.

LEO. Electors! Princes!
Our grievous task is o'er. Break up the Diet.
Look to the lady!

IDA. Ay, I'll follow them
To death. Avaunt, predestined murderer!
Bloodhound, avaunt! Thou art Fate's minister,
But I'm not yet thy quarry!

SCENE III.

The Market Cross of the little Town of Lutz. A Small Hostel with the sign of the Golden Stag at the Back of the Stage. Burghers and Country People pass and re-pass during the Scene.

Enter OTTO *and* ULRIC.

OTTO. Art weary, boy?

UL. No, father.

OTTO. Hungry?

UL. No.

Why dost thou ask me? Have I lagged behind,
Or craved for food? I can walk yet a league
Merrily; two leagues an' thou wilt. I'm strong
At heart.

OTTO. Thy limbs are failing. We have been
Afoot a day and night. Would I had left thee
In yonder woodland glen!

UL. We can return there.
The misty morn portends a sunny day,

So was poor Margaret wont to say. We'll find
Some grassy nook within that pleasant shade,
And sleep at ease.

OTTO. If I can purchase food—
If man, for gain, or woman for fond ruth,
Will give the outlaw bread for gold. Great Heaven!
And I have lived to doubt if I can save
My precious child from famishing! I have sinned;
Oh! I have sinned! But I am punished.

UL. Father,
Thou must not talk so. Cheer thee. Why didst leave
The towers of Brehna, where they loved us so,
Rudiger and his gentle mother?

OTTO. Boy,
Because they loved us so, and we loved them,
I left the towers of Brehna. I'll not bring
The avenging thunderbolt upon the roof
That sheltered us. I seek a natural fastness
Amid the rocks beside the Rhine. 'Tis near
Old Rudolf's cottage. Dost remember once
We journeyed thither? Ida meets us there.

UL. Ida! mine own sweet sister! Oh, what joy
To see her once again, mine Ida!

Enter ALF.

OTTO. Alf,
So near thy ancient hostelry!

ALF. My lord
Here in broad day!—here at the Market Cross!
Away! away! Your safety lies in woods,
In cliffs, and mountains. Wherefore have ye sought
The haunts of man?

OTTO. For food. We've tasted none
Through our long travel.

ALF. The fair boy! I'll bring ye

Food on the instant. Nay this gold is yours—
The gold your bounty gave me. [*Exit* ALF.

OTTO. Oh, true faith!
That changes not with fortune—tender, strong
As woman's love! Ulric, when thou shalt meet,
As meet thou wilt, bitter ingratitude
And sharp unkindness, think on Alf. 'Twill keep
Thy young heart warm and glowing toward a world
Where golden wheat ears grow above the tares,
And purest lilies scent the trackless wild.

Enter SIR HUGO, *Herald, Officers, and Guards.*

UL. Sir Hugo! dear Sir Hugo!

HUGO. Sound the trumpets,
Proclaim the sentence!

OFFICER. Few be here, save them.

HUGO. The better.

OTTO. He shrank from me, as men shrink
From a foul leper; broke from the poor boy's
Affectionate grasp, as though the deadly plague-spot
Were on his wrist! My father's friend! His comrade
In peace or war! My comrade, too! the friend
Of all my life! O God! O God! What's here?

[*Trumpets are sounded, and Proclamation made at the Market Cross.*

HERALD. Hear, men of Lutz, our sentence on the traitor,
Otto of Wittelsbach, a regicide
Under the Ban! Be his strong castles razed
To the earth with sword and fire; his wealth confiscate;
His lands and lordships forfeited; his name
Held infamous for ever! Outlaw he
And excommunicate; he and his race;
Sons, brethren, kinsmen, free to shaft and spear
As the vulture and the wolf. Whoe'er shall yield them
Food, shelter, raiment, dies. So shall they perish

In woods and wilds, and their unhallowed bones
Bleach in the wind and sun.

[*Trumpets again. During the sounding of the Trumpets,* ALF *re-enters, and gives Bread to* ULRIC.

UL. Thanks! thanks!

OFFICER. Seize yonder man; he hath brought food
To him beneath the ban.

OTTO. The food was given
To the hungry child, who hath laid it at your feet
Untasted. God of Justice! hear this law,
This law accurst and cursing, which conjoins
The guilty and the innocent, who saves,
And who destroys! Be wiser, juster, thou
That com'st as Murder's stern avenger. Free
Yon man, whose crime is pity; and with me
Deal as thou wilt. I am prepared to die.

HUGO. We come not here to slay thee. That sad office
Belongs to one who compts it joy. Count Calheim
Is near at hand. Bear hence the prisoner.

OTTO. What!
Thou wilt not free him? I must stand and see
My true friend dragged to death? I knelt last night
Before a cross where murder had been done,
And as I lay, prostrate in form and soul,
Shivering beneath the spirit's agony,
I inly swore to abide my doom in peace
And sad submission. I thought but of racks
And wheels, engines that rend the quivering flesh,
That valour smiles at. This more exquisite torture
I dreamt not of. God! That a man should die
For succouring a famished child! should perish
Because he sucked a woman, not a wolf,
And drew in milk, not blood!

ALF. Nay, chafe not thus.
I thank thy love; but life hath little left

That I should cling to.

OTTO. Thou shalt live. Sir Hugo,
Thou wast my father's friend. A king had been
Honoured in that proud title. For his sake—
He turns away! Hearken, old man! I speak
As one already in Death's grasp; the grave
Yawns underneath my feet; my voice resounds
Hollow as from a sepulchre. I warn thee,
There be foul sins that walk in holy names;
And Murder, though she take the state of Justice,
And pass unpunished here, at the great reckoning
Will cry out trumpet-tongued.

HUGO. Lead him away.

OTTO. Nay, then!

ALF. Oh, sheathe thy sword! I shall be safe.
Submit! submit!

UL. Alf, take my dagger, man!
Strive for thy freedom! Struggle with thy guards!
We'll aid thee.

OFFICER. Seize the boy!

OTTO. He must be bold
That lays a hand upon him. Mark me, Sirs!
The first that follows dies.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The Feast of the Vintage near the Rhine. A Gay Evening. Scene of a Vineyard, with a Rustic Festival. Baskets of Grapes, &c.

RUDOLF, HERMAN, CONRAD, BEATRICE, *Male and Female Vintagers. A Dance as the Drop-Scene draws up.*

RUD. Thanks, pretty maids!
CON. Nay, keep the mirth astir.
Another measure, girls!
RUD. Rather a song,
A merry song, to crown the vintage. Conrad,
Thou hast a jovial strain. The chorus of't
Begins "Hail to the purple"—Pshaw! that's wrong!
"Hail"—Why, the words fly from me! One that trips
Merrily o'er the tongue; and makes a quaint
And pleasant roundelay of jingling sounds,
Of "vine," and "wine," and "Rhine," enough to furnish
A travelling minstrel or gay troubadour
With rhymes for life. "Hail to the"—Fie! fie! fie!
My memory's older than I thought.
CON. I know
The strain thou mean'st.

BEA. Thou hast a newer.

RUD. Ha!

My pretty damsel, the new strain for thee,
As the new garment or new lover.

BEA. Sing
The old strain, Conrad.

Song—CONRAD.

The Rhine! the Rhine! the Rhine!
The sun pours down his golden light
O'er the broad river, full and bright,
While the brown vintagers, at play,
Close the glad labours of the day
Beside the castled Rhine.
The Rhine! the Rhine! the Rhine!
Hail to the sun-kissed, wreathy vine,
The bursting grape, the lusty wine,
That glows beside the castled Rhine!

The Rhine! the Rhine! the Rhine!
No stream so fair that sun shall see,
Nor hear such glorious revelry,
As when, with dance, and sport, and song,
Each dark-eyed maiden bounds along
Beside the castled Rhine.
The Rhine! the Rhine! the Rhine!
Hail to the sun-kissed wreathy vine,
The bursting grape, the lusty wine,
That glows beside the castled Rhine!

[IDA *enters during the Song, and seats herself at the side of the Stage.*

RUD. Thanks, Conrad.

CON. Why the song hath saddened thee!

RUD. Dark thoughts came with it. 'Tis some threescore years

Since I, a gay youth then, first heard that strain
Hard by the towers of Wittelsbach; and now
Those princely towers are fallen.

CON. Ay, with the dust
Their pride is levelled. The foul murderer's curse
Rests on the land.

RUD. There was I born, there wedded,
There my fair children round the household hearth
Sported, ay, and my children's children. There
My youngest-born, my fair-haired Agnes, nursed,
Herself a youthful mother, the sweet babe
Ida of Wittelsbach. I dare to speak,
In this black hour of fate, of them I served
In the bright sunshine of their days. Count Otto—

CON. Why name the traitor?

RUD. He was my liege lord,
And he is dead.

BEA. Dead!

CON. Ay, the deep Rhine covers
The regicide.

BEA. Alas!

RUD. The better, child!
The better! Who would wish him live?

VINTAGER. Is't sure
That he is dead?

CON. His cloak was washed ashore,
And his plumed casque and well-worn shield lay idly
Within a foundered boat. He's drowned.

RUD. The better.

FEMALE VINT. And the young Countess Ida?

BEA. Welladay,
For her, poor lady! Would that she were here,
That I might tend upon her!

RUD. Rather wish
She were at rest. My pretty Beatrice,

Thou hast a kindly heart. An old man's blessing
Rest on thy head.

BEA. What maid is this that seems
So weary? Take these grapes.

RUD. She hath a look—

BEA. This is the riper bunch.

IDA. I thank thy pity.

RUD. The tone, too! Pshaw! 'tis fancy.

FEMALE VINT. Beatrice,
We've far to go.

BEA. Ay, and to pass beneath
The Outlaw's Rock, where Alice vows she heard
Unearthly voices, and saw ghastly shapes.

IDA. The Outlaw's Rock! What mean ye?

RUD. 'Tis a cliff,
A ledge of cliffs a bow-shot from the Rhine.
A lofty rock, without a sheer descent,
Hollow within, and broken into caves,
A natural fortress, where 'tis said a murderer
Once kept his foes at bay the live-long year.
'Tis a wild legend.

BEA. Nay, but Alice vows—

RUD. Tush! tush! there's nearer danger! Herman saw—
Beatrice, thou'lt believe what Herman says,
Albeit my grandson—Herman saw to-day,
Not two leagues off, a band of archers, headed
By some great chief.

IDA. By whom? by whom?

RUD. Nay that
I know not. But one bold and lawless soldier
Were, to a fair young maiden, a worse peril
Than twenty phantasms.

CON. Come! I'll see ye past
This dreaded cliff.

[CONRAD, BEATRICE, *and the Vintagers go off.* RUDOLF *is following them, but is stopped by* IDA.

RUD. What seek'st thou?

IDA. But to change
A few sad words with thee. Thou know'st me, Rudolf,
The wretched maid that was so happy once,
Thy Herman's foster-sister. Oh, the comfort
To meet again a kindly look, to hear
A kindly voice! When yonder gentle girl
Spake in her gentleness, I thought this heart,
Which, 'mid oppression and revenge, seemed turned
To very marble, would have burst at the touch
Of her sweet pity! Bless ye! Bless ye!

RUD. Lady,
Be comforted. Can thy old vassal aid thee?

IDA. Not me, but him.

RUD. He lives then?

IDA. 'Twas a feint
Of one who loves him to elude pursuit.
He lives. He bade me meet him in the cliffs,
Betwixt your cottage and the Rhine. But I've
Been watched, and tracked, and forced to linger long
Upon my weary way.

RUD. Thou cam'st alone?

IDA. Ay; Isidore beside the Princess waits,
That ere she take the cloister vow, one prayer
For pardon and for mercy she may pour
Before an earthly throne. Alone I come;
And wearily must they, if still they linger
Within yon steep and barren cliffs, await
My tardy steps.

Enter HERMAN.

RUD. Herman!

IDA. Whence com'st thou? How

Got'st thou that purse?

HER. The Countess Ida!

IDA. Nay,

I'll answer thee anon. I ask thee now,
As thou didst cherish that sweet, gentle mother
Who nursed us both; as thou dost sacred hold
Pity and charity, and natural love,
How cam'st thou by that toy?

HER. A little hand,
A thin, small, trembling hand, dropt it but now
From off the Outlaw's Rock.

IDA. They're safe! They're there!
'Tis Ulric's. Canst thou guide me?

RUD. Ay, he knows
Each track of the wild cliff.

IDA. We'll go at once.
They're safe! They're found! Wilt thou go with me, Herman?

HER. Ay, to the death.

IDA. And wilt thou give me food
And wine?

RUD. All that I have.

IDA. Now blessings on ye!
We'll save them yet. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Valley amongst Wild Rocks, Bare and Barren.

OTTO, *alone.*

OTTO. Still succour comes not. Once again the sun,
Whose fervid brightness pouring blessings down
O'er all the land, hardening to golden grain
The milky seed of the harvest, mellowing
The luscious juices of the pulpy grape

Till it burst of over-fullness; that bright sun,
Whose glories mock our miseries, once again
Sinks in the west. I will but wait for darkness,
Then from this bare rock, where the parching beam
Hath drunk the runlets dry, I'll sweep at once
On man, his homes, his vineyards. Oh, to watch
As I have watched my brave boy, hour by hour,
Fading beside me, famishing, perishing!—
I will not see him perish! No, by Heaven!
They mated us with vultures and with wolves,
Like them we were to die. Do wolves and vultures
Behold their younglings starve afore their eyes,
And leave untouched the folds?

Enter ULRIC.

Ulric, my child,
Thou hast been from me long. Hast thou again
Been visiting the spring whose gentle fount
This hot and merciless sun hath dried? My boy,
How joyfully I'd give my blood for water
To cool those poor parched lips! my flesh for food
To nourish thee!

ULRIC. I've seen what's dearer, father,
Than water to parched lips—a friend.

OTTO. What friend?
Isidore? Ida?

ULRIC. Ida's foster-brother,
Old Rudolf's grandson, Herman. I saw him,
And he saw me. I had been to the spring—
Nay, I'm not now athirst, that grief is past;
But if the fount had welled again, I thought
To have brought a draught for thee.

OTTO. Thou break'st my heart
With thy brave patience. Oh, that he may bring
Succour! He saw thee?

UL. Yes, I flung the purse
With my name wrought on't that poor Ida gave me.
He'll come.

OTTO. Then cheer thee, boy! Take hope! take heart!
We'll to the Holy Land, and win once more
Name, fame, and honour. Cheer thee.

UL. I am cheery.
I have good cause to be so. Tell me, father,
They that have never sinned, other than all
Sin in the sight of angels; they who die
Too young for mortal crime to tarnish quite
The innocence that's born with them; they'll go
To heaven?

OTTO. Yes, yes.

UL. And they that having sinned
Repent?

OTTO. They also.

UL. Well, is that no hope
For me, for thee?

OTTO. O God! O God!

UL. Have patience
Thou that for thine own suffering takest no heed.
Grieve not for mine. Hunger and thirst are dead
Within me now. I have no pain. I'm light
And strong.

OTTO. Ay, as the momentary flash
Of the expiring lamp; the strength that grapples
With Death a breathing space, then drops.

UL. Good father,
When Herman comes, we'll home to Wittelsbach.
I know its towers are fallen, but the trees,
The running waters, and the pleasant lawns
Be there. The home where we have lived in peace
And love, oh! that's the holiest land! We'll find
Shelter amid the ruined halls.

OTTO. Accurst
For ever be the moody, wild despair
Which drove me from those walls in cowardly flight!
We should have held out 'gainst a legion, fought
Till none was left to slay, till not a stone
Of that vast pile but tottered. Then 't had fallen
Graced with a hecatomb of friends and foes,
Fit grave of our great race. A sepulchre
So stern and warlike 't had outvied the tombs
Of Eastern monarchs by the slimy Nile,
And made the huge and mystic Pyramids
Seem slight and trivial toys. Now—Yes, 'tis meet
We go there. So the hunted stag returns
To his old lair to die.

SCENE III.

Enter IDA *and* HERMAN, *from above, to* OTTO *and* ULRIC *among the Rocks.*

OTTO. Ida! my child! What means this breathless speed?
What ails thee, youth?
HER. My lord, we are pursued;
Ye are discovered. A foe climbs even now
The rock's steep side.
IDA. Alas! sweet brother!
OTTO. Peace!
Is that foe near?
HER. Midway the winding-path.
OTTO. Alone?
HER. Alone.
OTTO. Alone! what fear'st thou, then?
Be we not warned? And is not this the sword
That oft for life, or fame, or loyalty,

Hath swept the battle-field? Say, what were life?
A breath;—or fame? a bubble;—matched with ye,
My dear ones!—my thrice dear ones!

UL. Ida, sister,
Thou art too fearful. Some poor peasant swain
Wandering among the rocks—

HER. My lord, 'tis one
Of Calheim's archers, whose main band is now
Dispersed about the plain. I've known him long—
A neighbour's son, bold, crafty, covetous,
From his youth up. Show him but gold, and Caspar
Will neither blench at peril nor at sin.
He hath heard tell of voices and dim shapes
Around the Outlaw's Rock, and comes alone
To seize or mark the prey.

OTTO. Why, let him come.
Deem they my right arm palsied, that a churl,
A serf, should breast Count Otto? Why didst not
Shoot him at once?

HER. My lord, I raised my bow,
But soon as he espied it, he, too, raised—

UL. His bow?

HER. A fearfuller weapon. To his lips
A horn he lifted; that once winded—Please thee
Retire into the cave with Lady Ida;
I'll watch him from above; and if he come,
Spring thou at once upon him.

OTTO. I to hide
In dens and caves!

IDA. Oh, father!

OTTO. Get thee in,
Poor child! I will but place her safely, then
Return to share thy watch.

[OTTO *and* IDA *retire into the Cave.* HERMAN *mounts the Rock, followed by* ULRIC.

UL. Is Caspar clad
In armour?

HER. No. His garb is slight as mine,
Fit to ascend the toilsome path.

UL. (*Playing with* HERMAN'S *Bow and Arrows.*) This bow
Is trim and light. Let's see the arrows. So!
They're deftly feathered. I have bent a bow
At Wittelsbach.

HER. And shalt again.

UL. (*Looking off the Stage.*) Will Caspar
Come by this track?

HER. He must.

UL. And fix his eyes
Upon the path?

HER. Sooth, he were best, who treads
A road so perilous.

UL. He cannot come
Upon us from behind?

HER. No. Wherefore ask'st thou?
Dost fear?

UL. Fear! Nay, good Herman, I meant not
Reproach. I'm but a poor weak boy, half dead
Of grief and famine. What have I to fear?
(*To himself mutteringly.*) A man is bigger than a raven's nest,
A nearer mark, too! (*Aloud.*) Thou art sure he comes
This way?

HER. Full certain. Thou may'st wander there
In safety, pretty child.

Enter OTTO *from the Cave.*

OTTO. Dost see him, Herman?
Comes he? To bide within there, as a hind,
Chased by the hunters, couches in the covert—

I, an old warrior! Oh, the iron presses
Into my soul! Or viler still than that
Vile cowardice, to lurk within my den,
Stealthy and crouching, as the spotted pard
Or streaked tiger, and so spring unseen
On the defenceless wretch! One man! I'll front him
At once, and boldly,

HER. Now he comes. He sees us—
The horn is at his lips!

UL. (*Shooting off the Stage.*) Die!

HER. Look, he reels!
He falls from rock to rock! He's dead! 'Twas sure
An arrow from above.

UL. I shot him, father!

OTTO. My boy! Mine own brave boy!

Enter IDA.

'Tis he has saved us.

IDA. See how he droops his head upon my breast—
Feel how that bold heart pants. Rouse thee, sweet brother!

OTTO. This deed hath shaken in his glass of life
The sands that ran so low. My child! my child!
My valiant child!

IDA. He speaks; he fain would rise.
What wouldst thou, Ulric? Home? We have no home!

UL. To Wittelsbach.

OTTO. A fitting palace that
For Famine and her bridegroom Death.

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Ruins of the Castle of Wittelsbach, blackened by fire, and razed in many places nearly to the ground; only a few buttresses standing.

OTTO *leaning over* ULRIC, *dead.*

OTTO. Ha! did he move? No! no! Dead! dead! Cold! cold!
'Twas my fierce breath that stirred the clustering curls
On the pale forehead, still and heavy now,
Damp with the chilly death-dew. The small hand
Whose last faint pressure, when the feeble speech
Was quenched, still spake of love unquenchable,
That little hand falls lifeless from my grasp—
A lump of stiffening clay. My boy! my boy!
Gentle and brave! To die! and so to die!
Without a roof to shelter thee, or food,
Or needful raiment; the cold earth thy bed,
And howling wind and rain and arrowy hail
Beating around thee in the last long hour!
Yet not the pitiless elements, 'gainst them
His bold heart battled bravely, did to death
The valiant child. He died of grief and shame,
The slow sure poison of much misery.

Ha! some one comes. Is't Ida? No, a man!
Men, by the echoing footsteps! I'll not leave
The corse to birds obscene and ravening wolves.
No! no! I'll stay. What should I fear? Why, Fear,
Dark trembling phantom, linked to radiant Hope
As the shadow to the sunshine, Fear belongs
To life. I am death's watcher.

[*Enter* ALF *and another poor Citizen from the Ruins;* ALF *speaking as he enters.*

ALF. 'Tis in vain,
Good comrade! Here's no treasure. Let's begone!
'Tis sad to look upon these huge grim walls,
Once firm and stable as the rocks and hills,
Now scathed and overthrown; sadder to think
On him, the bold, the kind, who never heard
Of want but succour followed.

OTTO. Who is that
That dares commit a charitable sin,
And name without a curse a wretch accurst?

ALF. The Count of Wittelsbach!

OTTO. I am he that once
Bore that proud title. Wittelsbach and I
Alike are fallen. What! Alf! alive and free!
They do not then all die who pity us!
How didst thou 'scape?

ALF. An archer of the guard
Freed me for the sake of his old chief. My lord,
There be true hearts would rally round thee still;
Few love the Emperor; all abhor Count Calheim;
Draw but thy sword, set but thy lance in rest—

OTTO. What! be again a soldier and a knight!
Taste the keen joy of the combat! Mix once more
Beloved and honoured midst my fellows! live
Blessing and blest! Oh, mockery! I stand here

In the palace-home of centuries, which seemed
Eternal as our race, now like our race
A yawning ruin. At my feet the heir
Of our proud name, gone like that name. For me
There is nor Past nor Future.

ALF. The poor boy!
The noble, gallant boy!

OTTO. Thou must away,
They must not find thee here. What brought thee, Alf?

ALF. Poverty, good my lord. My honest neighbour
Hath lost his little all, and came to dig
For treasure in these vaults.

OTTO. For treasure? Alf!
Didst never hear from fond and babbling age
The annals of our race? How my great-grandsire,
Count Berthold, emptied chests of coinèd gold
And pledged his lands to raise and arm the people,
Ay, a whole people, burghers, franklyns, serfs,
In the Bohemian wars? Or how his son
Melted his silver vessels, even the chalices
Of our old chapel (sacrilege, the priests
Miscalled the deed), to feed the starving poor
In the great famine? Or how my good mother,
The Countess Bertha, when a ravaging fire
Burnt half the city, sold her jewelled chains
And strings of pearl and glittering carcanets
To clothe the shelterless? We had no hoards
In Wittelsbach. The treasures of our house
Were in its archives, in the knightly name,
Pure, stainless, bright, which I—which my foul crime,
My frenzy——Take this gold; 'tis all I have,
I need it not. I shall not need it. Go.

ALF. Now blessings on that noble head!

CITIZEN. My children
Shall pray for thee.

OTTO. Go! [*Exeunt* ALF *and the* CITIZEN.
Did he talk of blessings?
There is good need that one should pray for me;
For as I bend over the newly dead,
All uncompanioned save by mute despair,
Here on my ruined hearth, the murderer's curse
Tugs at my heartstrings, fires my burning brain,
Throbs in each throbbing pulse. What's here? A mattock!
I will go dig our graves.

Enter IDA.

IDA. The cave is now
Prepared, dear father. How is he? I left
Poor Margaret weeping betwixt grief and joy;
Poor faithful Margaret! She would fain have come
To tend upon us here. Might we not move him
To her trim cottage? Sleeps he still? Speak, father!

OTTO. Ida, if thou have pity, call me not
Father! The very sound stabs like a sword.
Call me the thing I am, girl—murderer!
Regicide! Call me—No; there is no word
For my unparagoned sin. The mind of man
When fashioning the myriad sounds that lend
A winged life to Thought, ne'er framed a name
For the slayer of his children. I was born
To be that first worst murderer.

IDA. Alas!
Then he is dead, mine own sweet brother!

OTTO. Ay;
Even as an oak stricken by the thunderbolt,
Whose fall hath crushed the tender sapling. Thee
The cloister shall protect; or Isidore—

IDA. Oh, never, never! Talk not of him, father!
I will not leave thee. None shall sever us;
Not even thyself. I'll cling to thee in life,

In death; as the ivy wreathes its living cords
Around the fallen oak. I'll follow thee
Through the wide world; tend on thee; comfort thee;
Make a home for thee in the savage woods,
Or the caves of the sea-shore Oh, look upon me
As thou wast wont! Bury not in his grave
All love! Hold me not from thee! Scorn me not!
I am thine own poor child.

OTTO. Oh, bruisèd flower,
Whose odorous perfumes breathe their balmiest sweets
Around the foot that crushes thee! bright star,
Whose quivering, trembling lamp holds out her light
To cheer and guide in misery's darkest hour!
My child! my Ida! all that fate hath left
To this poor heart! Forgive me, best and dearest!
Forgive me, mine own Ida! Thou didst love him
Even with a mother's tenderness;—and he—
Oh, how he loved thee, Ida! his young nurse,
When, tottering beneath the stout babe's weight,
Thou'st held him up to view the dazzling helm
Which fixed his infant gaze; and I have stooped
To place in reach of his uncertain grasp
My drooping plume;—Dost thou remember, Ida?—
From that time downward even to the day
When the bold boy first strove to draw my sword,
And swore that he would challenge knight and peer
In honour of his sister, his fair sister,
Thou wert the cherished idol of his soul,
The vision of all goodness and all beauty.
And I, for his sake who for my foul sin
Lies dead before mine eyes, and for thine own,
My best beloved, most precious, do abjure
For ever thy dear presence, do renounce
Thy filial duty; severing each link
Of the golden chain of love, sweet, gracious words

And patient smiles, and fond and hopeful looks,
Relics of Paradise, I give up all
In thee. Here lies one victim. Make me not
Thy murderer, Ida! The ban leaves unscathed
Thy innocent head. Go from me. Bring not down
Fresh sins upon my sinful soul. Go from me,
My precious child, my all!

IDA. Oh, father! father!
I cannot speak. Let my tears plead for me,
For me and for thyself. We'll go together.
We will not part.

OTTO. I dare not bless thee, Ida!
Blessings from me the accurst would turn to curses.
But there is One who reads the broken heart,
Who heeds the unspoken prayer. His blessing rest
Upon thee, my fair child. At night we'll seek
The Abbess of St. Agatha. Watch now
Beside the tranquil dead. I go to dig
His grave amid these frowning buttresses,
These half-discovered vaults, which like some huge
Ancestral tomb stand yawning to receive
Their master's fated race. Bide here. I go
To seek amid our desolated home
Earth's last best resting-place. [*Exit* OTTO.

IDA. No; I'll not leave him;
I'll never leave him.—Ulric! Oh, how calm!
How beautiful! how pure! The holy smile
That lingers on those lips reflects the bliss
Of the freed spirit. I'll go seek for flowers,
The pale, dim woodbine, the faint Autumn rose,
And lingering spikes of odorous lavender
To strew upon the corse. Flowers wet with tears
Are all I have, are all the mightiest have
To deck the loved-one's bier. The sepulchre,
Awful and stern, rejects wealth's tinsel gauds,

And in her silent womb receives alone
The simple offering prince or serf may cull
From upland pasture or deep woody glen.

Enter CALHEIM, *speaking to an Officer.*

CAL. Look that the archers close around the walls,
Watching that none escape. Wait thou beside
Yon buttress. Ay, 'tis she. Our search is o'er.

[*The Officer retires, and* CALHEIM *advances to* IDA.

Should I not know that form, albeit the robes
Of cumbrous pomp no longer idly shroud
The light and delicate grace of springy youth?
Should I not know that face, albeit none ever
Saw the fair cheek so pale? The Countess Ida.
Turn not away. I've sought thee, lady, long,
And must have speech with thee. Where dwellest thou?
Where is thy home?

IDA. Alas! I have no home,
A houseless, lonely wanderer.

CAL. Lonely?

IDA. Ay;
A solitary wanderer.

CAL. And thy father?
Why dost thou start, fair maiden? I but ask thee
Where bides Count Otto? Speak.

IDA. Hast thou not heard
The piteous tale, that in the swollen Rhine
A broidered cloak, bearing the lion crest
Of Wittelsbach, a draggled heron plume,
Such as still decked his knightly helm, were found
Floating upon the wave?

CAL. The broidered cloak!
The heron plume! Thou art ill at feigning, lady;
Thy fair cheek changes not; thine eye is calm;
Thy voice unfaltering. Not in such a tone
Speaks a fond daughter of a father dead.

He is not drowned; he lives; we've tracked him hither;
He lurks within these walls. Why, now thou tremblest;
Thine eyelids quiver now; and the flush of fear
Mounts to thy temples. He *is* here.

IDA. Count Calheim,
Be merciful! Have pity on us! Save him!
My tongue cleaves to my mouth. I have no words,
I am weaker than a child. Fear takes from me
All power of thought or utterance. Only save him!
As thou didst love thy father, as thou hop'st
For children that shall love thee in thine age,
Save him!

CAL. Arise.

IDA. I'll never leave thy feet
Till thou hast sworn to save him. Wouldst thou slay
A father 'fore his daughter's eyes? The headsman,
Rude and unnurtured as his axe, would shrink
From such a butchery. Draw off thy band,
Thou canst an' if thou wilt, and my whole life
Shall be one prayer for thee. Oh, save him! save him!

CAL. Listen. Thyself, and only thou, canst save
Count Otto.

IDA. I! Now blessings on thy head
Thou art a good man, Charles of Calheim. Blessings
On thee and thine! Out on my foolish fear!
Fie on me that I tremble so. Speak! Speak!

CAL. Calm thee and hearken. At the tournament
Of Worms I saw and loved thee; and when sent,
The Ambassador of Leopold, to Spires,
I asked thee of thy father; and with taunt,
Bitter and gross, with jibe and contumely,
Was my frank offer spurned. Had some vile groom
Or viler criminal sought of Count Otto
His daughter's hand, he could not have flung off
Bondsman or thief with fiercer scorn. Nay, listen!

My story shall be brief. The Counts of Calheim
Have still been known to keep an equal reckoning
With friend or foe. We are no ingrates, lady;
We pay our debts of good and evil, blessing
For blessing, curse for curse. I inly swore
A deep and lasting vengeance; and with aid
Of man's blind passions, cold, smooth treachery,
And rash, hot choler, I have drunk to the dregs
Revenge's bitter sweets. The haughty knight,
Who flung his biting scoffs at me, as boys
Pelt curs with pebble-stones, what is he now?
A regicide. The scathing, withering ban,
That cuts man from his fellow-man, hath smitten
Him and his house. Vengeance is satiate now,
And Love may revel.

IDA. Love! thy love!

CAL. Nay, snatch not
Thine hand from mine, fair Ida: lovelier far
In grief and terror than in hope and joy!
Snatch not away thy hand. Be wise, and save
The guilty and the innocent, Count Otto
And his fair boy.

IDA. He is beyond thy power.
And I, even now, with vain and sinful tears
Bemoaned his death. He is at rest.

CAL. Thy father!

IDA. He would not be so saved. Off, torturing fiend!
Destroyer of our race! This is not love,
But hate. Thy look is fearful, man! Hold off!
Approach me not. Avaunt!

CAL. Hast thou forgot
The Imperial archers? They await my call,
And know their duty. Once again I ask thee
Be mine.

IDA. Oh, never!

CAL. In thine own despite
I'll bear thee to a happier destiny.

Enter OTTO.

OTTO. Didst call me, Ida? Heard I not a cry
Of terror and of anguish? Miscreant, turn!
Though my good arm were withered, my keen sword
Blunted, this cause—Ha! is it thou, Count Calheim?
Thou hast tracked the quarry to his lair. So be it.
I know my doom. But an' thou touch a hair
Of her fair head, thou'lt find me still a man,
Ay, and a father. Dost thou brave me here,
Here in my old hereditary home?

CAL. Thy home! 'Tis forfeit to the empire.

OTTO. Thou
Didst see these strong towers crackle and consume
Beneath thy stronger fires. Thy heavy axe
Joined the devouring flame that blazed and roared
From turret to foundation-stone, till heaven
Blushed, and earth trembled, as each mighty tower,
An age's boast, fell prostrate. That fierce flame,
Bright minister of man's revenge, hath yet
A power beneficent—ay, even as death,
To enfranchise and to consecrate. It frees
Whom it destroys. No feudal lord shall rule
In these old feudal halls. Long waving grass,
Bramble, and briony, and pungent flowers
Shall fringe the crumbling walls. The hare shall couch
Beside the ruined hearth; the hill-fox hide
Within the deep recesses; the stern outlaw
Find in these vaults a tomb. Thou hast sought me here
Amidst the black and devastated walls,
That once were Wittelsbach. Didst think to pass
Safe from the lion's den? Thou hast found me digging
A grave for my fair boy, my famished boy,

My one fair, famished boy!—Didst think to 'scape
The mountain eyrie, where the eagle shrieks
Over his slaughtered young? Come on, Count Calheim!
I called thee coward once;—forgive that wrong!
Thrice valiant he who singly dares to brave
Me and my great despair. Come on. Away, girl!

CAL. Put up thy sword.

OTTO. Off with thee, Ida!—Now!—
Now!—He's a coward still.

CAL. Dar'st thou to challenge
A knight of the empire? Thou, with 'scutcheon burnt,
And banner torn, and broken spurs, and name
Degraded! Sir, the Emperor—not thine Emperor,
Thy master and thy friend;—Shak'st thou at that?
Not he, for he is dead;—Who trembles now?
But Leopold of Brunswick sent me hither
To do quick justice on a famous traitor
Under the ban. Dost mark me, Sir? a murderer!
A regicide! Thou art begirt with foes;
The Imperial archers wait within my call
To seize thee.

OTTO. Summon them; and see if then
I tremble.—Ida! sweet one, hang not thus
Around me. Sit thee down and listen, Ida,
To my last words. When I am gone, or now—
This very now—

IDA. Father, 'twas I betrayed thee!

OTTO. Vex not thy gentle heart with thoughts like these,
But listen and obey. Haste with all speed
To the convent of St. Agatha; the Abbess
Will shield thy tender youth. Beseech her, Ida,
For love of thy dear mother, that her son
May rest in hallowed earth, with holy dirge
And pious requiem. Crave nought for me;
My bones must whiten in the wind and sun

Unblest. But sometimes in thine inmost heart
Thou'lt think of me; and such mute thoughts are prayers
That mount to heaven seraph-winged. Go! go!

IDA. Father, 'twas I betrayed thee! I, thy child,
That called thee here to die.

CAL. Ay, that sweet voice
Hath done a royal service; hath brought forth
A criminal to justice; those bright eyes
Shall see the righteous doom.

IDA. Oh, mercy! mercy!

CAL. Thou still may'st save him. Wed me, and yon band—

IDA. Wilt thou dismiss them? Wilt thou save him?
Father,
I cannot see thee die! I have bethought me;
Hearken, Count Calheim! I will be thy bride.

OTTO. Sooner wed Death, the crownèd skeleton,
That banquets with the worm: famished as he,
Thy pretty brother, stabbed as I shall be;
Or with thy full heart bursting even here,
At sight of that last agony. Wed Death
In his most ghastliest form rather than lust
And cunning craft, and cowardly cruelty.
Count Calheim, call thy archers.

CAL. Nay, thou hear'st
The maiden hath consented.

OTTO. Demon, see!
She lies as one from whose frail form the spirit
Hath newly passed away. Oh, fondest! faithfullest!
That so thou wert! That the poor heart were dead
To grief and fear! Summon thy band. Dost linger?
Dost palter with thy duty? Must I show thee
To serve thy Emperor? Ho! brave archers! Warriors
Of Brunswick and the empire! Veterans
Of Philip and of Leopold! What ho!
I summon ye to vengeance.

Enter Soldiers, &c.

Ye are sent
To seek and seize Otto of Wittelsbach,
Traitor, and murderer, and regicide,
Under the ban. He hath deserved his doom.
But what may he deserve, the double traitor,
Your craven leader—Struggle not; I clutch thee
In a grip as strong as death!—who, not for pity,
But base and brutish passion, strove to save
The wretch he came to slay, to evade the law
He swore to execute, to abet and succour
The excommunicate? Say, for ye know me,
When you shall tell your children my sad tale,
That I denounced the traitor, I, Count Otto;
And 'twas my sword that wreaked Heaven's mighty justice
On him and on myself.

As OTTO *stabs first* CALHEIM *and then himself,* ISIDORE *enters with* ALF *and Attendant, seizes* IDA *in his arms; and the Curtain falls.*

DRAMATIC SCENES.

CUNIGUNDA'S VOW.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

The story which forms the groundwork of the following short Drama, will be found in Mr. Russell's delightful volumes on Germany; it has also given occasion to a very spirited ballad by Miss Landon, inserted, if I mistake not, in my friend Mr. Watts's Literary Souvenir for 1826.

A. Giacosa, Trionfo d'amore.

CHARACTERS.

Cunigunda, Lady of the Kienast.
Sir Albert, a stranger Knight.
Ernest, Cunigunda's aged Seneschal.
Gertrude } *Her Waiting Women.*
Editha }
Otto, her Page.

Squires, Pages, Grooms, and Waiting Women.

SCENE—A Hall in the Castle of the Kienast in Silesia.

CUNIGUNDA'S VOW.

Enter ERNEST *to* GERTRUDE *and* EDITHA.

ER. Where is thy lady, Gertrude?
GER. On the turret,
Watching the first glimpse of the stranger knight
Who comes to-day to attempt the perilous feat
Ordained by her rash vow.
ED. Poor Cunigunda!
Now pays she dearly the o'erweening pride
Of haughty beauty. Love hath well avenged
His martyred votaries.
ER. Speak not with that tone
Of pity, maiden! I'm an old retainer
Of Cunigunda's house; have carried her
A smiling child within mine arms; have loved her
Even as a father, as a father gloried
In her unparagoned charms. But her cold cruelty
Doth fret my very heart-strings. Not enough
For this proud beauty to reject all hearts,
Of knight, or count, or prince,—for princes sued
At Cunigunda's feet—but she must tempt
Each wooer to his death, grim ghastly death,

Untimely bloody death, by that stern vow
That he should win her who should safely ride
Around these Kienast walls, the narrow walls
Of these steep mountain towers! She might as well
Command them ride upon a falchion's edge,
Or stand erect upon the topmost spray
Of yon tall poplar. Many a gallant steed
Lies whitening in the abyss, many a brave knight
Hath perished in the rocky gulf;—and now
Another victim comes!

ED. One—If he fall,
The shades of all that for her sake have died,
Were they as countless as the leaves that dance
In Hirchsberg vale, would be avenged! She loves him,
Believe it, Ernest, with the fervid love
Of stern and haughty hearts.

ER. Believe who will!
She, thy proud mistress, love the falcon knight!
Albert, the falcon knight! A wandering stranger,
Whose house, whose name she knows not. Tush!

ED. Yet Albert
Is the sole name she speaks; the falcon crest
Her only heraldry.

ER. Princes have sighed
For Cunigunda, and that she should sigh
For this poor knight—

GER. 'Tis strange!

ER. One all unapt
To win a lady's eye! She that beheld
Unmoved the gay Count Cassel, whose light step
Came bounding like the roe, whose glance shot fire,—
She that beheld unshaken his bright form
Lie stiff and mute before her,—she that saw,
Without a tear, the bleeding mangled corse
Of Rudolf of Thuringia, blooming boy,
Fair, slender, blue-eyed boy, whose nut-brown curls
Clustered o'er his white brow, whose damask cheek,
And coral lip, and brilliant smile, and round

And joyous voice, were redolent of youth,
And hope, and life;—think'st thou that she, whom bloom
And charms like these ne'er touched, can love yon sad
And pallid stranger?

ED. With idolatry,
Passing what hath been told or feigned of love
In story or in song. Unapt to win
A lady's eye! Ernest, thou hast been trained
In courts, and camps, and battles; thou know'st well
All that pertains to man, but woman's heart
To thee is a sealed book. I tell thee, Ernest,
Yon pallid stranger, with the serious grace
Of his fine features, delicate, yet full
Of mild command; the dark locks closely shorn
Around the noble head; the manly form
Where grandeur blends with elegance; the voice
Clear, deep, and ringing, fitting instrument
Of lofty thought; the reverential port
Majestically bending with a proud
And prompt obedience, to the very name
Of woman rendering homage;—such an one
Might win—

GER. She comes!

Enter CUNIGUNDA *and* OTTO.

CUNI. Unbar the gates! Be quick,
Unbar the gates! Why bide ye loitering here
When ye should fly to bid the Castellan
Give present entrance to the falcon knight—
The valiant falcon knight? [*Exit* ERNEST.
Ye dally here,
Whilst he stands waiting—he! Why, of themselves
The Kienast gates should ope to him.

OTTO. He's here,
Fair Madam.

Enter SIR ALBERT *and a* PAGE.

CUNI. Now, Sir Albert!

AL. Beauteous lady,

I come to win thee.—Bid them lead my courser
Round to the court of guard. Is't not the way
That we must gain the ramparts? [*Exit* PAGE.
Sweet, I come
To win thee or to perish.

CUNI. Oh, no! no!

AL. Why, thou shouldst arm me for this viewless peril
As for some tourney fray. Why dost thou sigh?
Why turn so deadly pale?

CUNI. 'Tis a vast peril!

AL. 'Twas thine own vow imposed it; thine own choice;
And now 'tis mine. I knew afore I saw thee
What danger must be dared for Cunigunda,
And knowing came. Thou wouldst not sure fright *me*
With that same bugbear, Peril? I'm a warrior
Trained to defy, to seek each several form
Of death in glorious battle. Wouldst thou teach me
A cowardice now? Farewell! The sun shines bright
On hill and valley; the soft breezes play
O'er leaf and flower; over our heads the lark
Chants his gay matins: Nature smiles on me
And my high purpose;—for this deed is holy,
Thrice holy, lady!—When I come again—
Farewell!

CUNI. Oh, go not! go not!

AL. Cunigunda,
Hast thou not sworn to yield thy hand to none,
Save him who rides unscathed around these steep
And narrow walls? Is not that oath proclaimed
On earth, and registered in heaven?

CUNI. Alas!

AL. And I, too, have a vow recorded there,
To do this deed or perish.

CUNI. Oh, go not!
Not yet! not yet!

AL. Why should I dally?

CUNI. Stay
A month, a little month! Thou wilt not? Then

A week, a day, an hour! Grant but such respite
As the poor sentenced criminal may claim
When he craves time for prayer. Oh, go not yet!
Not yet! not yet!

AL. Is this the soft relenting
Of woman's tender heart to all whom pain
Or danger threaten? Didst thou thus implore
Henry of Cassel? or the gentle boy,
Young Rudolf of Thuringia?

CUNI. No. Oh, frown not,
Nor turn away thy head, nor snatch thy hand
From mine! They knew the peril that they braved,
And they would brave that peril. Canst thou blame me
That I ne'er loved afore? that I love now?
Oh, go not, Albert!

AL. Lady, I am bound
By a strong fettering vow—If I return
This hand is mine.

CUNI. Ay, hand and heart. Yet go not!
Beseech thee, stay with me!

AL. When I come back
Thou art wholly mine?

CUNI. Ay; ay. But go not yet!

AL. Mine to dispose even as I will?

CUNI. Ay, dearest,
Even as thou wilt. But stay with me awhile!
Stay! stay! [*Exit* ALBERT.

ED. He's gone!

CUNI. Oh, stop him! Say I beg!
Say I command! Fly! fly! [*Exit* OTTO.
And yet my oath,
My fatal, fatal oath! Without such trial
We may not wed—But, oh, to see him dashed,
As they have been, from off the wall and lain
A pale, disfigured corse—Oh horror! horror!

Re-enter OTTO.

Stop him, I say; and, if need be, by force.

Command him hither.

OTTO. Lady—

CUNI. Dost thou hear?

Where is the falcon knight? Am I not mistress
Within these towers? Command him hither.

OTTO. Lady,

Even as he left thee, at a bound he sprang
On his proud steed, and scaled the rampart stairs;
Ere now he's on the walls.

CUNI. Oh, save him! save him,

Ye saints that watch o'er love! Go some of ye
To the high turret that o'erhangs the Castle,
And look ye send me blessed tidings—no!
The truth! the very truth! Are ye not gone?

[*Exeunt* OTTO *and* GERTRUDE.

ED. Wilt thou not go thyself? 'Twere a less grief
Than crouching there in that strong agony
Of fear—thy head between thy hands, thy limbs
Shivering, thy bosom panting. Go!

CUNI. He'll die!

He'll die! And how could I endure—He'll die
For me; for me!

ED. Take comfort, lady.

CUNI. Comfort!

Who ever passed that dread abyss, where yawns
The Hirschberg valley under the high rock
Crowned with our frowning battlements, or dared
The desperate leap from tower to tower, nor fell
Crushed, breathless, motionless? Who e'er returned
Alive?—Oh, horror! horror! Edith, fly!
Speed me some tidings. [*Exit* EDITHA.

He must die; and I—
I that so loved him, I that would have given
My life a thousand-fold to save him—I
Shall be his murderess.

Enter ERNEST.

ER. Nay, lady, nay,

There's yet a hope.
CUNI. Old man, art thou turned flatterer?
He'll perish.
ER. I beheld the manèged steed
Ascend the steep and narrow stair; a steed
Of Araby, light-limbed and fine, with eyes
Of living fire half starting from his slim
And veiny head; a hot and mettled steed;
Yet trained to such obedience, that each motion
Of the swift foot seemed guided by the will
Of the bold rider, even as they had been
One and incorporate. If man may achieve
This perilous deed, the falcon knight alone—
CUN. Ernest, thou shalt have lands enow to make
Thyself a belted knight! Now blessings on thee
That bring'st me hope!—But Edith, Gertrude, Otto,
Why come they not? I could have won to Prague
And back, in half the time. Why come they not?
Good tidings find swift messengers. Alas!
I fear; I fear.
ER. Shall I go seek them?
CUNI. No.
The abyss, the dread abyss, where the old wall
Shelving, and steep, and crumbling, overhangs
The vale of Hirschberg from such dizzying height
As never plummet fathomed;—that abyss—
Henry of Cassel there, and the good knight
Of Olmutz—Oh, I have been cruel, Ernest,
And for my sins he'll die! to punish me
He'll die! he'll die!

Enter GERTRUDE.

GER. Lady—
CUNI. Why dost thou pause?
ER. See how she pants! she's breathless.
CUNI. Is there any
Panting and breathless save myself? He's dead!
I see it in her face.

GER. He hath safely passed
The abyss.
CUNI. Now thanks to Heaven! The dread abyss.
He's safe! he's safe! Thou shalt be portioned, Gertrude.
He's safe!
ER. Yet that wide leap from tower to tower
Where Rudolf of Thuringia—
CUNI. Out on thee,
Raven!
ER. That fearful leap, with scarce a ledge
Where steed— [*Shouts without.*
CUNI. What means that cry?

Re-enter OTTO *and* EDITHA.

Editha, Otto,
What means that cry?
ED. He's safe! the leap is past;
The falcon knight is safe.
ER. Look to her!
CUNI. Nay,
I'm well. Say o'er again!
ED. The leap is past.
The falcon knight is safe.
CUNI. My Editha,
Ask what thou wilt of me. Was ever woman
So blest before! The falcon knight is mine,
Mine own, and I am his. Oh, thanks to Heaven!
Now, ye that called my vow cruel and rash,
What say ye now?
ER. Alas, dear lady, still
I grieve for them that—
CUNI. Talk not of them. Think
What were a thousand such as they, compared
With the bold falcon knight!—Editha, Gertrude,
Albert will come to claim his bride; wipe off
These blistering tears, braid this dishevelled hair,
Adjust my wimple and my veil;—my knight
Will come to claim his bride.

Enter SIR ALBERT *and a Page.*

He comes ! away !
I was a fool to think of vanity ;
He will not love his Cunigunda less
That she hath lain on the stone floor in prayer
And tearful agony, whilst he hath dared
This perilous deed.—Albert !

AL, (*To the Page.*) Lead Saladin
Gently around the court. He trembles still
At the o'ermastered danger.

CUNI. Albert !

AL. (*Still to a Page.*) Loosen
The foaming bit. It is a matchless steed.

CUNI. Oh, matchless ! matchless ! I myself would be
His groom. But Albert !

AL. When he's cooler, bid
Thy comrade, Jerome, ride him back to Prague.
Bring thou another courser straight. The day
Wears on. [*Exit Page.*

CUNI. Sir Albert !

AL. Madam !

CUNI. Hast thou not
A word for Cunigunda ? Dost thou stand
There, like some breathing marble in thy cold
Stern haughty beauty, mute and motionless,
With arms close-folded and down-gazing eyes,
No thought for Cunigunda, not a word
For her whom thou hast won, not even a look ?
Dost thou not claim me, Albert ?

AL. Lady, no ;
I have a wife—ay, start and tremble ! turn
As pale as winter's snows ! feel every pang
That thou hast caused and scorned !—I have a wife,
A sweet and gracious woman ; beautiful
Beyond all beauty, for the blush of love
The smile of kindness, and the dancing light
Of those joy-kindling eyes, in whose bright play

The innocent spirit revels, blend their spell
With features delicate as lily bells,
A shape more graceful than the clustering vine.
Talk of thy stately charms! At Ida's side
Thou wouldst show coarse and sunburnt, as the brown
And rugged elm beside the shining beech.
Ay, shrink and tremble! hide thy burning cheeks
Within thy quivering hands!—Wilt thou hear more?
This lovely loving wife, my three years' bride
And twice a mother,—Oh, none ever bent
With such a grace as she o'er sleeping babes,
Nor ever youthful mother bent o'er babes
So like the Cherubim!—This wife, so fair,
So sweet, so womanly, whose pitying heart
Would ache to see a sparrow die, this wife
I love.

CENI. Why then—Oh, cruel!

AL. Dar'st thou talk
Of cruelty, proud murderess, whose meed
For true-love hath been death? Whose sinful vow
Slew the most gracious boy of all the earth,
The hope and pride and joy of his high line,
Young Rudolf of Thuringia, my dear brother,
My dear and only brother?

ER. 'Tis Duke Albert!
Yet pity her! See how she smites her brow,
And tears her raven hair!

AL. Where was her pity
When that fair boy—Murderess, 'Tis Rudolf's brother
That speaks to thee. When first I heard that tale,
Several revenges, deadly, bloody, fierce,
All that the body can endure of keen
And lengthened agony, the rack, the wheel,
The stake, rushed through my brain, but they had been
A poor and trivial vengeance, all unmeet
For such o'erwhelming wrong; my cunning hate
Hath found a more enduring curse. Thou lov'st me,
Thou lov'st me, Cunigunda, with the hot

Wild passion of thy nature, and I scorn thee!
Thou art contemned and loathed by whom thou lov'st;
Won and abandoned; spurned and thrown aside
Like an infected garment. The plague-spot
Of sin is on thee, woman; blackest shame
Shall follow like thy shadow. 'Twas for this
I donned the mask of courtship; for this trained
My faithful steed. Thy worthless hand is mine—
Nay touch me not, hang not about my knees—
Mine to bestow. Some horse-boy of my train
Shall prove thy fitting partner.

ED. Oh, for pity!
For manly pity, good my lord, break not
The bruised flower!

CUNI. Be silent, Editha!
I have deserved all evil. Deal with me
Even as thou wilt, Duke Albert. I've deserved
Thy hate—but soon my heart—my bursting heart—
Deal with me as thou wilt. 'Twill not be long!

AL. Nay then—Rise, Cunigunda! Lift thy face
From off the ground, and listen. I'll not break
The bruised flower. Live and repent. In prayer
And pious penance live. The cloister cell
Were thy meet refuge. By to-morrow's dawn
Go join the Carmelites at Prague. For them
Who died untimely, for thyself, for me
And for my children, pray!—Now home, Sir Page!
My steed! my steed! [*Exeunt.*

THE FAWN.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

The story of this little Drama is taken, with some variation in the scene and catastrophe, from the beautiful Ballad entitled Fause Foodrage, in the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.

CHARACTERS.

Countess Lindorf.
Bertha.
Leopold.
Conrad.
Frederick.

SCENE—A Forest in the Tyrol;—a Castle in the background.

THE FAWN.

LEOPOLD, *alone.*

LEO. Lie there, dark, murderous weapon! I renounce thee!
Farewell, ye barbarous sports! Alas, poor fawn!

Enter BERTHA.

BER. Did I not hear a gun? The poor, poor fawn
Licking its bleeding mother! This is cruel.
LEO. Oh, cruel, cowardly! Never again—
I hate my treacherous skill; I hate myself.
BER. Look how the poor fawn with his nudging nose
And pretty stamping feet, dabbled in blood,
Tries to awake his dam! How piteously
He moans, poor spotted thing! Art thou quite sure
The doe is dead? I thought I saw her move.
LEO. Too sure. 'Twas not her motion; that fond thing
Striving—I cannot bear to look on them!
She is too surely dead; when I came up
I found her dying; her fine delicate limbs
Trembling with the death-shiver. She scarce breathed;
But the pure instinct of maternal love
Struggled to keep in life. She fixed her sad

Affectionate eyes upon her young one's face,
Then moaning over her as now he moans,
Stretched out her feet, and died. Oh, Lady Bertha,
Man is the wilder brute!

BER. But thou art grieved
And knew'st not—No, I'm sure thou ne'er didst dream
Of this poor fawn?

LEO. No; it lay sleeping there
Behind the bushes. But a savage heart
Was mine, that could even here—Look round thee, lady!
There is not in the forest such a spot
As this. Look how the wood-walks hither tend,
As to a centre: some in vistas green,
Pillared and over-arched, as the long aisles
Of an old proud cathedral; others wandering
In lovelier mazes through a various scene
Holly or copse-wood; scarce the eye can trace
Their coy meanders, but all meeting here
Beneath this monarch oak, through whose thick boughs
The sun comes flickering. How the indented leaves
Of brightest green cut clearly the blue sky
And the small clouds! And how this tiny spring
Bubbles and sparkles round the moss-grown roots,
Winding its silver thread along the short
Elastic turf, so thickly set with flowers,
And mixed with fragrant herbs, till it is lost
Amongst the bowery thickets! Not a spot
In all the forest can compare with this,
Nature's own temple! And that delicate thing
Made up of innocence, and love, and fear,
And trembling happiness, most beautiful
Of all this beauty, she, who stood enjoying,
With a sweet peaceful spirit, drinking in
This flood of bliss—that I—I hate myself!
And thou must hate me, lady.

BER. Oh! no; no;
Thou art so sorry!

LEO. 'Tis my father's fault;
He keeps me here, waging unequal war
With these poor harmless deer, when I should be
Armed in the desperate strife, stemming the tide
Of glorious battle, winning death or fame.
BER. That were a strange place to learn gentleness!
LEO. The only place for me. Oh, I must forth
Into the stirring world! I have wild dreams
Which I would fain make real; daring thoughts
Which must be turned to action; hopes which soar
High as the eagle's wing; all madness now—
But—Lady Bertha, I have basked too long
In the bright blaze of beauty; I have gazed
Unseen, unknown as our poor forest cot
Looks upward on thy castle. I must gain
A name, or die. A glorious name!
BER. Nay, Leopold—
LEO. She knows me!
BER. Leopold—
LEO. Oh, now that name
Is precious to my heart! Thou know'st me, lady?
BER. Think'st thou I thus had spoken with a stranger?
I've often seen thee at our early mass,
And sometimes from the ramparts; and besides
My own dear mother oftimes talks of thine—
Her faithful favorite maid.
LEO. She was her maid;
Her favorite maid. Oh, I had not forgotten.
BER. And of thy father, her kind faithful friend,
That old and reverend man, whose shining hairs,
Whiter than ermine, so become his bright
And healthful cheek. How much I love to see him!
How much I wish to know him! My dear mother
Talks oftentimes of him. Ay, and of thee—
Oftenest I think of all. Dost thou not know
That I'm thy foster-sister? That one breast—
Alas, that breast is cold!—nourished us both?
And that we should be friends? Oh, I have longed,

Even in the holy chapel, to say this;
But my stern uncle—
LEO. Kindest, loveliest maid!
How well that heart is mated to that face!
And does the gentle Countess speak of me—
That beautiful grief? Yes, I have often seen,
Have often felt those dewy eyes where love
Mixes with pity as in angel's looks,
Fixed upon mine, as she would read my soul.
Oh! she would find it full of deep respect
For her—and for her daughter.
BER. Leopold,
Look! the poor fawn hath moaned himself to sleep!
Give him to me. I, captive though I be,
Or little better in those frowning walls,
Yet have I there a lone deserted nook
Which long neglect hath made a sort of garden;
All clothed with moss, and grass, and trailing plants
And decked with gorgeous weeds. The wild vine there,
And white-veined ivy from a natural arbour;
And I have mingled odorous shrubs, and sprinkled
Bright showers of garden blossoms. It is now
A bower fit for the fairies; and unclaimed
Of any other I still call it mine.
And there my pretty fawn shall dwell with me
And feed on roses;—my poor dappled fawn!
No; not in thine arms. Give him into mine.
LEO. Nay, let me carry him!
BER. Oh! no, no, no;
I must not; dare not.
LEO. Only to the gate.
BER. The gate! Then I must tell my truant tale,
Must own my wanderings. First put down the fawn.
I know not why—but, Leopold, I feel
As if I had done wrong—as if—and yet
I'm sure I meant no harm. Let us sit here
On these soft mossy roots. It is, indeed,
A chosen spot! Well, Leopold, thou know'st

That my good father died ere I was born,
A luckless girl! and that his castle, lands,
Titles and vassals, to his brother fell,
And I, amongst the rest, his infant ward.
With my dear mother I have lived with him
In a most strict seclusion—prisoners
In everything but name! For eighteen years,
All my short life, we ne'er have passed the gate.
LEO. Villain! base cowardly villain! Soon a time
Shall come—Go on, sweet lady!
BER. She still mourning
Her lord's untimely death; and I—
LEO. Oh, villain
That drink'st the orphan's tears! A time shall come—
BER. Nay, peace; I pr'ythee, peace; I still content—
Content is not enough!—I still as happy
As a young bird.
LEO. Happy! with that fierce tyrant,
That stern oppressor!
BER. He was sometimes kind,
And my dear mother always. All the house
Was good and kind to me—too good! too kind!
Oh! there is in man's heart a fathomless well
Of goodness! I had nought but gratitude,
And yet how kind they were! Content and happy
Was I; yet sometimes an unbidden thought
Sprang up—a hope—a wish—an earnest wish!
A powerful passionate hope! We had a maid
Bred in the forest,—a young innocent girl,
Who pined for trees, and air, and liberty,
Even till she sickened, and her round red cheeks
Grew thin and pale; and books, dear books! they all
Of freedom spake and nature; and the birds
That eddied round our windows, every song
Called me to lovely nature; till I longed
Intensely, as the schoolboy yearns for home,
To cast aside only for once the walls
Of our old castle, and to feel green leaves

About me, and to breathe the pleasant air,
Freshened with wilding flowers and dewy grass
And warmed by the bright sun.

LEO. And did the Count
Refuse thee, lady?

BER. Yes.

LEO. But they, his vassals?
Surely one only man of all the world
Could utter *no* to thee?

BER. I asked them not.
Have I not said that they were good and kind,—
Kindest to me? And could I tempt them on
To possible punishment.

LEO. Punished for thee!
Oh! what a bliss!—But thou art here?

BER. I found
The lone deserted court I called my garden,
And dressed my bower, and tried to trifle thus
My bootless wish away:—But still it clung!
And one day following, with my eye, my heart,
A ring-dove hastening to her woodland nest,
Wishing I too had wings, I marked how low
In that dark angle was the ruined wall,
Covered with clustering ivy and o'erhung
By an old ash. And almost with the thought,
The ivy boughs my ladder, and the ash
My friendly veil, I climbed the wall and came
Down on the other side, a safe descent,
Propped by the uneven trunk;—and there I stood
Panting with fear and joy at liberty!
Yet was I so o'ermastered by my fear,
That for that day I could not move a step
Into the forest; but crept trembling back—
And wept as if for grief. Often since then,
When the Count Lindorf is abroad, as now
That he lies sick at Linz, I venture forth
As fearless as a dove.

LEO. And still unmarked?

BER. The sheltering forest reaches to the wall—
Look, 'tis close by!—I never have seen trace
Of man but once; then thou wast reading here:
I had resolved if ever I should meet
Thee, or thy good old father, to accost ye;
Yet when I saw thee here—I know not how—
But my heart failed me, and I fled. I wonder
At to-day's courage; but the poor, poor fawn—
I only thought of him. Well, I must hence;
My mother else may miss me.
LEO. Then the Countess
Knows not this path?
BER. No; her sweet gentle spirit
Is cast in a too anxious mould; she fears
For all she loves. No; I have never told her.
But now that we—and she must see my fawn!
Ay—and she ought to know.
LEO. And when she knows—
Oh, lady, I shall never see thee more!
BER. Yet I must tell her—Surely I must tell her!
She is my own most dear and loving mother:—
Ought I not, Leopold?
LEO. Lady, thou shouldst;
Though it will root from out my heart a hope
Dearer than life; thou shouldst.
BER. Give me the fawn!
And, Leopold, stay here. I think—I hope
That she will wish to see thee. If she should—
Come not with me. Be sure to stay just here.
Farewell!—Nay, struggle not, my pretty fawn!
Thou must along with me.—Farewell! [*Exit* BERTHA.
LEO. Farewell,
Loveliest and most beloved! Well might she wish
To tread the woodland path,—light-footed maid!
How beautiful she is, with her white arms
Wound round her innocent burthen, and her head
Bent over his so lullingly! Even he,
That wild and timorous creature, feels the charm,

And is no more afraid. She disappears;—
I scarce distinguish now her floating veil
And her brown waving hair. How beautiful!
How graceful! Most like one of Dian's nymphs
But full of deeper tenderness. Her voice,
Her words still linger round me like the air,
The dewy sunny air of which she spake,
Glowing and odorous. Oh! that I were—
And I will be. Yes, loveliest, most beloved,
I will deserve thee! I will make my name,
My humble lowly name, worthy to join
With thine, sweet Lady Bertha!—Hapless thing,
Thy gay compeers may bound at peace for me;
I shall seek braver fields. For thee, poor doe,
I will go bury thee deep in yon dell.
Should she return,—and will she then return?
How my heart throbs to know.

Enter CONRAD.

CON. Surely I saw
Some bright and lovely maiden flitting by
Close to the castle wall. Along this path
She must have come. Or was it but the vision
That fills my dreams by night, my thoughts by day,
The bright and lovely form?—Ha, Leopold!
Hast thou seen here a woman, a fair woman?

LEO. She has just parted hence, the Lady Bertha.

CON. Bertha! Oh I must see, must follow her!

LEO. Nay, 'tis too late. Ere now she's in the castle.
She will return.

CON. Oh, wondrous, wondrous chance!
The Lady Bertha!—Did she speak to thee?
What seems she, Leopold? Gay, gentle, kind,
Her mother was. Oh, tell me of her, boy!

LEO. Father, I must to the wars.

CON. Tell me of *her!*

LEO. I must go win a name.

CON. Well! Well! thou shalt.

Talk to me now of Bertha!
LEO. This is Bertha!
Why war and fame and life they are all Bertha!
Nothing but Bertha!—Oh, I love her, father,
Madly and wildly. She is my whole world,
Rip up my heart and you will find all Bertha;
And I will wed her. I must to the wars
And earn her love. Nay, shake not thus thy head.
Though she be great and I be lowly, father,
I tell thee I will make a glorious name,
Or die.
CON. This is most wondrous. But the Count—
Count Lindorf?
LEO. Oh! true love is strong and mighty;
Pride bends before it.
CON. Were it pride alone!
Count Lindorf, as I hear, would rather see
The Lady Bertha in a convent cell
Than wedded. He is dark and dangerous,
And full of fears. Men say—
LEO. Speak on, speak on.
What say they, father?
CON. Dark and dangerous,
A fierce and gloomy—Nay, no more of this.
Whither dost drag that doe?
LEO. To bury it
Far from her sight; she will be here anon.
She fain would know thee, and she speaks of thee
So reverently! In truth she is as humble
As a poor village maiden; yet as gracious
As a born princess. I shall soon return.
Stay, dearest father, lest she come the while;
She fain would see thee. [*Exit* LEOPOLD.
CON. Oh, if she could know,
Could feel, could share—Be still, my beating heart!
Thou shalt not master me, be still!—She comes,
The beautiful! the kind!—Oh, that I dared—

Enter COUNTESS LINDORF *and* BERTHA.

BER. This is the spot I'm sure; but where is he?
CON. These are the first words I have heard her speak
In all my life! How mine ear drinks her voice!
The Countess too!
COUN. Conrad, my kindest friend!
My faithfullest! my best! How many cares
Have made me old since in thy parting tears
I said Farewell to truth and honesty!
CON. My gracious lady!
COUN. Conrad, where is he?
CON. In yonder dell. She hath caught sight of him.
BER. Ah, there he is, burying the poor, poor doe!
I must go help him.
COUN. First come hither, Bertha.
This is my faithful friend—
BER. Leopold's father,
I know him well. He is no stranger, mother;
Why I have loved him ever since I saw
Those reverend hairs; and he I'm sure loves me.
Dost thou not, Conrad? See, he looks on me
With such a kindly gaze.
CON. How beautiful
She is! What a bright smile lives in her eyes!
And see! her soft white hand is dimpled o'er
Like a young babe's. Oh, take it not away,
That soft and dimpled hand!
COUN. No, rather give
Both hands, my Bertha. He's thy foster-father.
BER. May I not call him father? I, alas!
Have never known one.
CON. Blessings on thy head,
Beloved child!
COUN. Now, my own Bertha, go
And seek young Leopold, and bring him hither.
Nay, let her go!— [*Exit* BERTHA.

Yes, Conrad, she is more
Than thy heart paints her: through these long, long years
My only comfort. She is all made up
Of sweet serene content; a buoyant spirit
That is its own pure happiness. If e'er
Count Lindorf chide her—and, in sooth, even he
Can scarcely find a fault to blame in Bertha—
But should he chide her, she will meekly bend
For one short moment, then rise smiling up,
As the elastic moss when trampled on
By some rude peasant's foot. Never was heart
Stronger than her's in peaceful innocence.
Now speak of him.

CON. First, Madam, he loves her.
I knew it but to-day.

COUN. So! she loves him,
And knows it not. But tell me of his temper.

CON. Kind, noble, generous, but all too hot:
Just like those bright black eyes, whose fiery flash
Kindling with living light, I've seen thee watch
With such a painful joy.

COUN. I have gazed on him
Till my eyes ached, till every sense was dazzled.
Yet with that fire there was a gentleness,
A softer, tenderer look. And still he knows not—

CON. I dare not trust him, lady. He already
Abhors Count Lindorf; he already longs
For war, for danger, for renown, for aught
That at the risk of life or limb may win
A name, a noble name.

COUN. A noble name!
He pants for that! And I, that with a word—
Oh, may I? dare I?

CON, Gracious lady, no.
The Count is dangerous, and this rash youth—

COUN. True; true. And I expect my powerful kinsman,
The Baron Zutphen; he shall hear my story,

My sad, sad story, Conrad. Oh, the strife
Of love so long pent in, so strong, so deep,
So gushing through the heart with bitter fear!
And I that ne'er have known the dear delight
To give him pleasure—Oh, to think that I
Could with a word, one word—I must away;
I dare not trust myself. Good Conrad, help me
Back to the Castle.

CON. Rest thee here awhile,
Dear lady! How she trembles! Nay, sit down:
Command thyself.

Re-enter LEOPOLD *and* BERTHA.

BER. Mother!
COUN. Who called me mother?
LEO. Let me support her. Lady, lean on me.
COUN. His very tone!
BER. How art thou, dearest mother?
COUN. Better.
BER. But still thou tremblest, and so pale!
LEO. Oh, do not rise. Thou art too weak!
COUN. A strong
And a kind arm supports me.
LEO. Never, Madam,
Was it so honoured. Would that all my life
Might pass as this brief moment!
COUN. Leopold,
I think.
LEO. And for my father's sake, perhaps—
COUN. Thy father! Ay, indeed, thy father! Leopold,
I have a boon to ask of thee.
LEO. A boon!
Say, Madam, a command.
COUN. Well! a command.
Conrad hath told me thou wilt to the wars;
I have a powerful kinsman, young and brave,
High in the Emperor's favour; I expect him
At Lindorf in the autumn. Be content

To wait his coming, and my first request
Shall be that he will guide thee in that path
Of stainless honour which himself hath trod.
Say, wilt thou wait till then?

LEO. How can poor Leopold,
The humble lowborn Leopold, deserve
This wondrous bounty! Not for the wide world,
Not even for her would I deceive such goodness.
Madam, all poor and lowly as I am,
Yet I have dared to love—Oh pardon me!
Even if thou banish, pardon!—Who could see
Thy Bertha and not love her?

COUN. And what says
My Bertha to such love?

BER. My dearest mother,
What is that proud word *rank?* What hath it been
But the stern prison-bolt that barred me out
From air, and sunshine, and the song of birds,
And the sweet scent of flowers? And must it now
Exclude—

Enter FREDERICK.

FRED. Thank Heaven she's found! I have sought thee, Madam,
Everywhere vainly. I have that to tell
Which may not brook delay.

COUN. Is the Count Lindorf
Returned?

FRED. My gracious lady, he is dead.

CON. Dead!

FRED. Even so. Last night Count Lindorf died.

COUN. No, no, he lives! the real Count Lindorf lives!
My son! my son! my own, my very son!
Thou for whose sake I have endured to live
In prison and in sorrow—thou art mine,
My Leopold! In the face of all the world
I will proclaim thee rightful Count of Lindorf.

LEO. Mother! I do not ask if this be real,

My heart hath always claimed thee. Yes; I am
Thy son, thy very son.
BER. And the poor Bertha—
What then is she?
COUN. My daughter, still my daughter.
LEO. Bertha my sister?
COUN. No; thy wife. Will that
Please thee as well? And our dear Conrad's child.
CON. My own sweet child!
COUN. My son, thy speaking eyes
Demand my story. Briefly let me tell
A grief which eighteen years have left as fresh
As yesterday. Thy father was a man
Born to lead all hearts captive. Such he was
As thou art now. Look at the features, Frederick—
The shape, the air.
FRED. It is his very self.
COUN. I loved him—we were in our bridal year—
Oh, how I loved him! So did all the world,
Except his envious brother. They went forth
Together, at the break of day, to hunt
Here in this very forest; and at eve
One, only one, returned. Mine—mine—Oh, God!
The agony, the frightful agony
When he at last was brought—Oh, God!
LEO. My mother!
COUN. Some tale was told of direful accident—
Would that I could believe! But from that hour
Peace, rest, and appetite, and natural smiles
Forsook the conscious fratricide—Oh, guilt
Hath well avenged us! But, ere yet the flush
Of bold, triumphant crime had paled to fear,
And dark remorse, did Conrad overhear—
For I was great of thee, my Leopold,
And grief and horror had brought on my pains,—
This Lindorf bribe a ruffian to secure
My infant, if a male. Thou, sweetest Bertha,
A new-born, innocent babe wast in the castle;

And he, and my kind nurse, and she, the kindest
And faithfullest of all, thy blessed mother,
Contrived, I scarcely conscious, to exchange
My boy for his fair girl.—A boundless debt
We owe thee, Conrad.

CON. Pay it to my Bertha.

LEO. She is herself that debt! What was the life
Of fifty such as I, compared to Bertha?
A paltry boon, scarce worth my thanks, dear father!
She is the treasure! She—

BER. Cease, flatterer, cease!
I must go tend my fawn.

COUN. My son, I long
To see thee in thy castle.

FRED. Ye will find
The Baron Zutphen there to greet ye, Madam.
He came to proffer succour and protection
To thee and Lady Bertha; he will now
Welcome his brave young kinsman. Not a heart,
Vassal, or servant but will feel the joy
Of this discovery.

COUN. Leopold, my son—
How proud I am of that unwonted word!
Let us go meet the Baron. Bertha, Conrad,
Daughter and friend, come with me; this kind cousin
Must see how rich I am! Mine own dear son!

THE WEDDING RING.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

The old ballad of The Berkshire Lady, which recounts an adventure that actually happened above a century ago to one of the most respectable families in that county, is the origin of the following Drama. The names and localities that I have chosen are of course fictitious.

CHARACTERS.

Sir Edward Delmont.
Arthur Delmont, his Brother.
The Lady Stanley.

SCENE—A magnificent Saloon in the House of the Lady Stanley near Reading.

THE WEDDING RING.

SIR EDWARD DELMONT *and* ARTHUR.

SIR ED. Why thus amort, fair brother? 'Tis a rich
And princely hall, a palace-like demesne.
Seest thou yon stately oaks and those old thorns,
The growth of centuries, mingling their gay wreaths
Of pearly blossoms with the weeping spray
Of the light, feathery birch, and darker shoots
Of shining holly, while amidst the fern
The dappled deer lie couching? Art thou master
Of this fair seat?

AR. I' faith I know not.

SIR ED. 'Twas
A gay and glittering coach, drawn by four mares
Of the right Flanders breed, conveyed us hither;
And she, our fair companion, mistress seemed
Of that proud equipage—the nameless she!

AR. Not wholly nameless,—Mary;—the good priest
Told us so far.

SIR ED. And in so telling, told
Full little. Mary! commonest of sounds!
Name of all wear! So doth the lordly Earl,
So the poor cobbler call his wife; the princess
Within her stately bower, and the coarse drudge
That milks her kine, both answer to that name.

'Tis general as the violet, now lurking
Beneath the white-thorn hedge, now proudly placed
I' the garden's southern nook beside the rose.
She's Mary Delmont now. Dost shrink to hear
Those words conjoined?

AR. Not I.

SIR ED. Yet thou art sad
And silent, brother mine; thy cheek is pale,
Thy fiery glance is quenched, and thy smooth brow
Contracted into lines of wrinkling care
Fitter for me thine elder; though, I grant ye,
The chances of this morning might perplex
Even my ripe wisdom. Wilt thou hear them? First
To abide a challenge at the rapier point,
The cause and challenger unknown; and then
Having with some small pain—for true men love not
To fight with shadows and for shadows!—having
Roused thy hot valour to that Quixote strain,
To find thy puissant adversary changed
To a fair damsel, who doth give thee choice
'Twixt two sharp hazards, wedlock and the sword;
To marry in a mask thou know'st not whom;
To come home with thy bride thou know'st not where;
And when safe lodged within this goodly chamber,
The bride to disappear thou know'st not how;
Whilst at short intervals come grinning knaves,
On thriftless errands bent, to trim the hearth
Or close the casement, and young tittering girls
Thrust giggling faces through half-open doors;
And if we ask who brought us here? or where
We be, unlucky?—groom and maid burst forth
Into ungoverned laughter, and so vanish.
Say I not sooth?

AR. 'Tis over true.

SIR ED. And hath not
Noon long been past, whilst we have been astir
Since dawn, nor broke our fasts?

AR. Thrice happy thou

Whom such a grief can trouble!
SIR ED. Nay, good brother
Thou know'st the proverb says that a full sorrow—
But trust me, Arthur, 'tis for thee I grieve:
I doubt the lady much.
AR. Yet this fair seat—
SIR ED. Didst ever see that sport of Fletcher's muse,
The comic scene where Leon tames the pride
Of Margarita?
AR. Yes; yes; yes.
SIR ED. And dost not
Remember how a cunning quean, in the absence
Of her rich mistress, cozened a gay gallant
To wed her?
AR. Yes; yes; yes.
SIR ED. And brought him home
Even to her lady's dwelling?
AR. Yes, I tell thee.
Beshrew thee, Edward, that hast put in words
The very thought that woke within my heart
Such torture! To have wedded poverty,
Plain, honest, houseless poverty, were nothing,
Poor though I be, were nothing! But a cheat,
A stale and common cheat! perchance a lewd—
It cannot be, it shall not.
SIR. ED. I would fain
Prove an ill guesser. But what ground of faith
Hast thou? Thou hast not seen her face, scarce e'en
Her bearing,—so the veil and mantle shrouded
A form of towering height; thou hast not heard
Her voice, for surely, nay, she owned as much,
Her very tone was feigned. Thou may'st have wedded
Old age and ugliness.
AR. She's young and fair;
Of that be sure. Didst thou not see the white,
Smooth dimpled hand, the taper fingers, jewelled
Even to the joint, the slender wrist with veins
Meandering through its snow? Never such hand

Pertained to aught save one as finely formed,
As delicately reared. It trembled too,
That soft hand trembled and grew cold in mine
With fearful modesty, then warmed again
With love, quick fluttering love. Ay, and athwart
Her very wildest speech, although the words
Were daring, and the purport rash and strange,
Yet was the manner soft and maidenly,
As of one born and nurtured in a pure
And gentle dignity, that dared the rather,
Because in her bold innocence she guessed not
The censure she provoked. I'll trust her still,
In all her mystery.

SIR ED. Heaven send her true!
How wilt thou know her?

AR. By the very sign
We spake of; the fair hand.

SIR ED. The hand! Why, Arthur,
Grant that the hand, so white and violet-veined,
The small pink palm and taper fingers pass
For marks of beauty and of gentle blood;
Yet many a gentle dame hath one as fair
As—

AR. Pshaw, man! Pshaw! The ring! The ring! Thou know'st
How unprepared we came for spousal rites,
But I by chance wore on my hand the gem,
Sir Rowland's legacy, his famous Psyche,
And in default of the plain golden round
I slid the storied onyx on her finger;—
Hark! [*One of the Doors of the Saloon is thrown open.*
Sure I heard light footsteps. Hark! Oh, grant
It may be she, unmasked, unveiled, disclosed
In mind and person. Yet have I a fear
Of this strange meeting mingled with my hope.
Do thou accost her first.

[ARTHUR *retires to the Window*—SIR EDWARD *remains in the Middle of the Apartment.*

SIR ED. None enters.
AR. What!
Another mockery?
SIR ED. No. I see her now,
Beyond the gothic portal, in the hall,
A noble lady, speaking with an air
Of mild command to her mute menial train.
Look! Thou may'st see her. Look!
AR. I dare not. Is't
The lady? Mine? Speak! Speak!
SIR ED. I know not, Arthur,
In truth I know not. Yet it cannot be.
She, whom we saw, could never have concealed
That queenly shape, that goddess port.
AR. Methought
She too was graceful.
SIR ED. Why this is a Grace,
Or rather a young Juno. Even a goddess
Wanting the state imperial would back somewhat
Of her calm modesty.' How those dark curls,
Falling in their rich clusters evenly
Adown those damask cheeks and that slim throat
Of ivory, add to the placid grandeur
Of her fair face. Yet those large modest eyes
Have a quick brightness in them; a gay dimple
Plays round that finely chiselled mouth;—she's scarce
So awful as she seems.
AR. How is she robed?
Like her—
SIR ED. No! she was quaintly garmented
In weeds of grey and pink,—a shrouding mantle,
A black disfiguring mask, a floating veil:
This lady hath a rich yet simple robe,
Of whitest satin, a long ample robe,
Purfled with lace and broidered with rare pearls;
Pearls round her fairer neck, and one white rose
Mixed with the ringlets, whose luxuriant pride
The golden bodkin scarce restrains.

AR. The garb
Is bride-like.
SIR ED. It but seems the meet array,
The every-day attire of that young beauty.
AR. Her hand?
SIR ED. Is gloved. Sure I have seen that face!
Was't in a picture? or a dream? No! no!
I've seen her living self. 'Tis the rich heiress,
The Lady Stanley. Dost thou not remember
The good Lord Stanley, Arthur? the old friend
Of our dear father? Many a time and oft
Hast thou sate on his knee, a rosy boy,
Whilst he hath talked to thee of his fair girl,
His pretty black-eyed maid, and laughed to hear
How thou wouldst vow when grown into a man
That she—We were at Florence when he died;
But two years since I saw, and scarcely saw,
At court the blooming heiress. 'Tis herself!
She comes. Stand not aloof, like village churl,
From that rare beauty, Arthur.

Enter the LADY STANLEY.

Lady!
LADY. Sirs,
I crave your pardon, if, as I have heard,
Ye have waited long untended. The bright sun
Tempted me forth amongst the flowers.
SIR ED. Thyself
A brighter, sweeter flower!
LADY. Beseech ye, Sir,
Waiving all compliment to tell at once
Your errand hither. I should grieve to fail
In courtesy to men of gentle seeming;
But being here a maiden and alone,
Rich therefore envied, young therefore exposed
To evil thoughts and evil tongues, it suits not
My state to harbour gallants such as ye
Within my house, unless indeed the occasion

May justify the visit. Seek ye aught
Of me or mine?
SIR ED. Fair Madam, for myself
I well may answer, No. My brother yonder
Seeks, what full many a man hath vainly sought
Of the young Lady Stanley,—
LADY. Wherefore pause?
What seeks the gentleman?
SIR ED. A wife, fair Madam!
A wife!
LADY. What mean ye, Sirs?
AR. Not to offend
Such beauty. Gentle lady, 'tis a tale,
So wild, so strange, so marvellously true,
I almost shame to tell it.
SIR ED. Shall I spare
Thy blushes, Arthur?
LADY. Nay, methinks the hero
Will prove the best narrator.
SIR ED. (*Aside.*) Say'st thou so!
LADY. Pray ye, be seated, Sirs. Now to thy tale.
AR. Much may befal in few short hours. Last night
Whilst sojourning at Reading, thither called
With this my kindest brother to attend
A kinsman's bridal, and still lingering on
In that gay pleasant town, a thriftless truant
From law, dull law, and law's thrice dull abode
The silent Temple—Yesternight, returning
Merrily to our inn, a tiny page
Slid in my hand a scroll, and disappeared
Ere we could ask, Whence com'st thou? 'Twas a cartel.
LADY. Alas!
AR. A challenge from some unknown foe
To meet him, hand to hand, and sword to sword,
At peep of day upon the Forbury Hill.
LADY. Alas! Alas! How wild is man! Unknown, too!
Didst thou attend his summons?
AR. Of a surety.

LADY. And he—?
SIR ED. Ay, now the marvel comes. Fair Madam,
No He was there.
AR. On that small eminence
We met the dawn, and saw the morning mists
Rise from the valley of the Thames, disclosing
The dewy meadows, and the antique bridge,
And Caversham's white hills,—but foe saw none.
LADY. Perchance he had repented his rash challenge.
SIR ED. Nay, lady, list the tale.
AR. Foe saw we none;
Save a masked damsel pacing silently
Beneath the venerable trees, which wave
Their verdant plumage o'er the hill's steep brow.
LADY. A damsel! and was she the foe?
SIR ED. Good sooth,
She's like to prove so.
LADY. Sir!—Methinks thy brother
Can tell his tale without thine aid.—The damsel?
AR. Paced to and fro, fair Madam. Once or twice
Drew near, then back again, as awe or shame
Strove with some desperate purpose.
LADY. Did she speak?
AR. At last with, as it seemed to me, a forced
And acted bravery, she drew a rapier
Forth from beneath her cloak, avowed herself
The challenger of yesternight, and then
In few, brief, hurried words gave me the choice
To fight her or to wed.
LADY. Well, Sir!
SIR ED. Well, Madam!
In faith thou must accept my story, lady,
Or else get none; he's silent from mere shame.
But canst thou—for all women have a gift
Of divination in man's weakness,—canst thou
Look in his face, nor read at the first glance
His answer? "Benedick the married man"
Is stamped on every feature. Ah! fool! fool!

AR. Edward, beware lest this blunt mood of thine
Carry thee past my patience.
SIR ED. Art thou not
A fool? And am not I a triple fool
To grieve o'er thy rank folly?
LADY. But thy tale!
He wedded then with this unknown?
SIR ED. Despite
All counsel and all warning. Close at hand,
Stood Church and Priest and Clerk in due array
For his undoing. They were wedded, lady,
In shorter space than I have known the gallant
Waste on the fashion of his doublet. Marry!
This garment is for life.
LADY. And she still masked?
SIR ED. Masked, nameless and unknown. At the Church porch
Waited a gilded coach, which brought us straight
To this fair hall; and the she Will-o'-the-wisp,
The female Jack-o'-lantern, having lodged us
Safe in her cage, vanished through yonder door.
LADY. 'Tis a strange tale.
SIR ED. A tale would make the fortune
Of a score of ballad-mongers, an 'twere but a thought
More credible. But, Madam, canst thou give
No help in this wild strait, no clue to trace
The run-away? Hast thou no damsel errante,
No jill flirt in thy train were like to play
The bride in this adventure? No pert quean
Of a waiting-woman, or wild wanton cousin
To cozen our young gallant?
LADY. Out upon thee!
Thou art uncivil.
SIR ED. Of a younger brother
He's none so poor; and I, being, as thou seest,
A bluff, unnurtured bachelor, foredoomed
To break my neck in a fox-chase, he may reckon
On my succession. Many a prim she-cousin,

The accustomed garnish of your noble tables,
That combs my lady's lap-dog, gathers scandal
For her diversion, is a skilful loser
At every game, a frontless flatterer
At every season, many such a pest,
However gently born, had dared this venture
For freedom and a husband.

LADY. Once again
Thou art uncivil, Sir. Thank Heaven, my kindred
Are of a nobler temper.

SIR ED. My suspicions
Point to the waiting-damsel. Your poor kinswoman
Hath commonly a mincing delicate mien,
Compound of fear and pride. Hast thou no wild
Intriguess in thy train, whom love of gold—

LADY. Thou deemest then it must be love of gold?

SIR ED. Madam, I do.

LADY. And thou?

AR. I hope not so,
And as I hope believe. Woman is generous,
Not mercenary.

SIR ED. Man is vain. I hold that
The truer axiom.

LADY. What did she resemble,
This truant bride?

SIR ED. A strapping quean; as tall
As the great May-pole on the green; as awkward
As ever danced the May-day round; as pert—

AR. Hold! hold, good brother. She was of a height
Noble, sweet lady, as thine own; as graceful
Almost as thy fine form; and for her speech
'Twas frankness mixed with modesty. I trust
To find a virtuous wife.

LADY. A fair one, too?

AR. So please you, gracious Madam. Not perchance
What might seem fair by thee;—full many a flower
Shows like a weed beside the rose.

LADY. And rich?

Think'st thou to find her rich?
AR. For that I care not
Howbeit she prove not mercenary.
SIR ED. Tush!
If she be poor, how can she quit herself
Of that suspicion?—Madam, once again,
Canst thou end our wild quest?
LADY. How should I! Masked,
And nameless!—Ye yourselves might meet this bride
And pass her by unknown.
SIR ED. We have one token—
AR. A white and peerless hand.
SIR ED. A peerless ring!
The hand was coarse and sunburnt, housewifely
And toil-stained,—but the ring! an antique cameo,
A Psyche, a quaint butterfly, whose wings
Rather of gauze than stone seemed springing up
In act to fly, a piece of matchless art
Found mid the ruins of old Rome, and rated
Far above diamonds. To think that gem
Should deck some stale cheat's finger!
LADY. (*Taking off her glove.*) Was the ring
Like this upon my hand?
AR. My bride! my wife!
Art thou indeed my wife?
LADY. In very sooth,
No less.
AR. Sweet ring, I worship thee. My wife!
My beautiful! my true!
LADY. (*To* SIR EDWARD.) Now, heretic,
Was the masked bride a cheat?
SIR ED. Fair Lady Stanley,
I cry you mercy!
LADY. Nay, thou 'scapst not so:—
Was she a cheat?
SIR ED. My pretty sister, yes.
Not when she wore a mask on her bright face,
But when she doffed that mask, and strove to play

The stranger!—simpleton! as if each blush,
And downcast look, and sighing smile, and low
And faltering accent told not plain as words
Her secret.—Sister, were that lord of thine
Less than a miracle of modesty,
He must have known his bride. At the first glance
I saw the trick, and instantly resolved
To tease the teaser.

LADY. 'Twas a strange and bold
And venturous hazard;—but I long had heard
All good of Arthur Delmont: as a child
From my dear father; as a youth from friends
And kinsmen; and when I at last had seen,
Had loved, and knew not—'Twas unwomanly,
Unmeet; but ye shall see the wife redeem
The errors of the maid.

AR. Oh, may I merit
Thy noble trust.

SIR ED. It was a generous sin
And well may find forgiveness. Gentle Madam,
I have a heavier charge. Here in thy house,
And on thy wedding-day—pray Heaven thou use not
To starve thy guests!—I, thy new husband's brother,
Am famished.

AR. Cannibal!

LADY. I cry you mercy!
But dinner—

SIR ED. Breakfast, Lady Stanley! Breakfast!
I've tasted nought to-day. Let's in to breakfast
And talk at ease of this strange chance. Thy hand,
Fair sister,—ay, the ring becomes it well,—
The antique wedding-ring, an emblem fit
Of happiness and love.—To breakfast, quick! [*Exeunt.*

EMILY.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

CHARACTERS.

Lord Glentham.
Amelia, his Daughter.
Maurice, Amelia's Husband.
William, a boy of six years old, the son of Maurice and Amelia.

SCENE—The inside of a Cottage.

EMILY.

AMELIA, *at work, singing;* MAURICE *enters during her Song.*

SONG.

The sun is careering in glory and might
'Mid the deep blue sky and the cloudlets white;
The bright wave is tossing its foam on high,
And the summer breezes go lightly by;
The air and the water dance, glitter, and play—
And why should not I be as merry as they?

The linnet is singing the wild wood through;
The fawn's bounding footstep skims over the dew;
The butterfly flits round the flowering tree;
And the cowslip and blue-bell are bent by the bee.
All the creatures that dwell in the forest are gay—
And why should not I be as merry as they?

For this is May Day, and at first peep of dawn
For May boughs and wood-flowers the children are gone,
To deck the tall Maypole that stands on the green,
And wreathe the fair brow of the laughing May Queen;
None dreameth of lesson or labour to-day,—
Aud why should not I be as merry as they?

AME. Ah! art thou here? I thought I was alone.
Hast thou been long returned?
MAU. Even now.
AME. I'm glad;
For I would feel thy presence,—as I used
When I, a conscious girl, if thou didst come
Behind my chair, knew thee without the aid
Of eye or ear. A wife's love is as strong,
Her sense should be as quick.
MAU. But maiden love
Is mixed with shame, and doubt, and consciousness,
Which have a thousand eyes, a thousand ears.
Amelia, thou art pale. Nay, if thou smilest
Thou wilt be pale no longer; thy rich smile
Is fitly wedded to a varying blush,
That flutters tremulously in thy fair cheek,
Like shivering wings of new-caught butterflies.
Ah, there it is, that blush! But thou wast pale
Stooping so long o'er thine embroidery,
Thine irksome toil. Go forth into the air.
AME. Not yet; there still is light enough to work;
I have one flower to finish. Then I'll fly
To the sweet joys of busy idleness,
To our sweet garden. I am wanted there—
So William says; the freshening showers to-day
Have scattered my carnations; I must raise
Their clear and odorous beauties from the dark
Defiling earth.
MAU. That task is done.
AME. By thee?
After thy hard day's toil? Oh, what a fond
And foolish lover-husband I have got!
Art thou not weary?
MAU. Only just enough
To feel the comfort, sweetest, of repose;
Of such repose as this, here at thy feet
Extended, and my head against thy knee.
AME. Even as that sweet and melancholy prince,

Hamlet the Dane, lay at Ophelia's feet
His lady-love. Wast thou not thinking so?

MAU. I was.

AME. And I was likening thee to one—
Dost thou remember?—'tis the prettiest moment
Of that most marvellous and truest book—
When her so dear Sir Charles at Harriet's feet
Lay turning up his bright face smilingly.*
Dost thou remember?

MAU. Banterer! Where is William?

AME. That is a secret. Do not question me,
Or I shall tell. He will be shortly back.

(*Sings.*)

The linnet is singing the wild wood through,
The fawn's bounding footstep skims over the dew;
The butterfly flits round the flowering tree;
And the cowslip and blue-bell are bent by the bee.
All the creatures that dwell in the forest are gay—
And why should not I be as merry as they?
And why should not I be as merry as they?

MAU. How much thou lov'st that song!

AME. He loves it so,
Our William: if far off within the wood
He do but catch one clear and ringing note
Of that wild cheerful strain, he scuds along
With his small pretty feet, like the young brood
Of the hen-partridge to her evening call.

MAU. Well, but where is he?

AME. Guess.

MAU. Nay, tell me, love.

AME. To-day, at noon, returning from the farm,
Where on some trifling errand I had sent him,
He left the path in chase of that bright insect,

* Sir Charles Grandison, Vol. VI.

The burnished dragon-fly, with net-work wings
So beautiful. His shining guide flew on,
Tracing the channel of the rippling spring
Up to its very source. There William lost him:
But looking round upon that faëry scene
Of tangled wood and babbling waters clear,
He found a faëry carpet; strawberries
Spread all about, in a rich tapestry
Of leaves and blushing fruit: and he is gone,
With his own basket that his father made him,
His own dear father, to bring home his prize
To that dear father.

MAU. Pr'ythee, love, say on;
This is a tale which I could listen to
The livelong day.

AME. And will it not be sweet
To see that lovely boy, blushing all over,
His fair brow reddening, and his smiling eyes
Filling with tears, his scarlet lips far ruddier
Than the red berries, stammering and forgetting
The little pretty speech that he hath conned,
But speaking in warm kisses? Will it not
Be sweet to see my precious William give
The very first thing he can call his own
To him who gives him all? My dearest husband,
Betray me not. Pretend an ignorance;
And wonder why that cream and bread stand there,
And why that china bowl. Thy precious boy!

MAU. *Thy* precious boy! Amelia, that child's heart
Is like thee as his face.

AME. Liker to thee
Are both—our blessing! What a world of love
Dwells in that little heart!

MAU. Too much! too much!
He is too sensitive. I would he had
An airy playmate full of mirth and jests.

AME. Nature's his playmate; leaves, and flowers, and birds,

And the young innocent lambs, are his companions;
He needs no other. In his solitude
He is as happy as the glittering beetle
That lives in the white rose. My precious boy!
MAU. What are these? Tears! My own Amelia,
Weep'st thou for happiness? What means this rain
That falls without a cloud? Fie! I must chide thee.
AME. Yes; thou art right. Useless, not causeless tears!
They will have way. Forgive me, dearest husband!
This is our wedding-eve. Seven years ago,
I stole, a guilty wanderer, from my home,—
My old paternal home!—and with the gush
Of motherly love, another thought rushed in—
My father!
MAU. My Amelia!
AME. Seven years
Have pass'd since last I saw him; and that last!
The pangs of death were in my heart, when I
Approached to say, "Good night!" He had been harsh
All day; had pressed Sir Robert's odious love,
Had taunted at thy poverty—my Maurice!
But suddenly, when I all vainly tried
To falter out "Good night," in his old tone
Of fond familiar love, and with the name
Which from his lips seemed a caress, he said,
"God bless you, Emily!" That blessing pierced
My very soul. Oft in the dead of night
I seem to hear it. Would he bless me now?
Oh, no! no! no!
MAU. My own beloved wife,
Think not too deeply. There will come a time—
AME. Oh, Maurice! all the grandeur that she left,
The splendid vanities, ne'er cost thy wife
A sigh, contented in her poverty,
Happy in virtuous love. But that kind voice,
That tender blessing, that accustomed name
Of fondness!—Oh! they haunt my very dreams;
They crowd upon my waking thoughts; then most

When some sweet kindness of my lovely boy,
Some sign of glorious promise, tells my heart
How little I deserve—

MAU. My Emily!

AME. No, not from thee—not even from thee that name.
'Tis sacred to those dear and honoured lips
That ne'er will breathe it more. I am ungrateful
Thus to repine, whilst thou and our dear boy—
Where can he now be loitering? These dark clouds
Portend a storm.

MAU. Already the large drops
Come pattering on the vine leaves. I will seek—

Enter WILLIAM.

AME. He's here. My William, wherefore didst thou stay
So long? and where's the basket?

WIL. Kiss me first.

AME. Now, where's the basket?

WIL. I had filled it half,
When a strange gentleman came through the wood,
And sat down by me.

AME. Did he eat the strawberries?

WIL. Dear mother, no. He talked to me, and then
I could not gather them.

AME. What said he, dearest?

WIL. He asked my name and your's, and where I dwelt,
And kissed me.

AME. And what else?

WIL. Called me dear boy,
Said that a storm was coming on, and asked
If I would go with him.

MAU. Ha! and what saidst thou
To that, my William?

WIL. No. But then I prayed him
To come with me to my dear home. Look there!
Do you not see that tall man in the porch,
His head against the woodbine? That is he.

AME. Dear Maurice, bring him in. [*Exit* MAURICE.
WIL. I am so sorry
That it is grown so dark, you will not see
What a sweet face he has. Only he's older,
I think he's like you, mother; and he kissed me
As you do now, and cried.
AME. Oh, can it be—

Re-enter MAURICE *with* LORD GLENTHAM.

LORD GLEN. If I intrude—
AME. That voice! Oh, father! father!
Pardon! Oh, pardon!
LORD GLEN. Madam!—
AME. I'm your daughter—
Call me so, father! For these seven long years
I have not seen your face. Disown me not!
Call me your daughter! Once from your dear lips
Let me hear that dear sound! Call me your Emily,
And bless my dear, dear child! For such a blessing
I'd be content to die. William, kneel here;
Hold up your innocent hands.
LORD GLEN. Rise, Madam; rise.
AME. Oh, call me once your daughter, only once,
To still my longing heart! My William, pray
For your poor mother.
WIL. Oh, forgive us, Sir,
Pray, pray forgive us!
LORD GLEN. Madam, I have sought
A half-hour's shelter here from this wild storm;
And, as your guest, I pray you to forbear
These harrowing words. I am but lately risen
From a sick bed.
MAU. My wife, compose thyself,
Retire awhile. [*Exit* AMELIA.
Please you to sit, my lord.
LORD GLEN. I thank you, Sir. You have a pleasant cottage,
Prettily garlanded with rose and woodbine
And the more useful vine. Has it been long

Your home?

MAU. Five years.

LORD GLEN. You have left the army?

MAU. Yes.

There was no chance of war; nor could I drag
My sweet Amelia through the homeless wanderings
Of a poor soldier's life. This is a nest,
However lowly, warm and full of love
As her own heart. Here we have been most happy.

Re-enter AMELIA, *with a Light and a Basket*

MAU. (*Meeting her*). Thou tremblest still.

AME. I could not stay away.

It is such joyful pain to look upon him;
To hear his voice;—I could not stay away.
William, there is thy basket. Offer it.

LORD GLEN. No, my dear boy.

AME. Now blessings on his head
For that kind word!

LORD GLEN. Surely she was not always
So thin and pale!—Your husband says, Amelia,
That you are happy.

AME. I have only known
One sorrow.

LORD GLEN. Ye are poor.

AME. Not that! not that!

LORD GLEN. You have implored my blessing on your son;
I bless him.

AME. On my knees I offer up
My thanks to Heaven, and thee. A double blessing
Was that, my father! on my heart it fell
Like balm.

LORD GLEN. I will do more. Give me that boy,
And he shall be my heir. Give me that boy.

AME. My boy! Give up my boy!

LORD GLEN. Why he must be
A burthen. Ye are poor.

AME. A burthen! William!
My own dear William!
LORD GLEN. Miserably poor
Ye are. Deny it not.
MAU. We earn our bread
By honest labour.
AME. And to work for him
Is such a joy! My William, tremble not!
Weep not, my William! Thou shalt stay with me
Here on my lap, here on my bosom, William!
LORD GLEN. Why thou may'st have another child, and then—
AME. Oh, never one like this—this dearest child
Of love and sorrow! Till this boy was born
Wretchedly poor we were; sick, heartsick, desolate,
Desponding! but he came, a living sunbeam!
And light and warmth seemed darting through my breast,
With his first smile. Then hope and comfort came;
And poverty, with her inventive arts,
A friend; and love, pure, firm enduring love;
And ever since we have been poor and happy:
Poor! no, we have been rich! my precious child!
LORD GLEN. Bethink thee for that child, Amelia,
What fortunes thou dost spurn. His father's love
Perhaps is wiser.
AME. Maurice, say.
MAU. My lord,
'Tis every whit as fond. You have my thanks.
But in a lowly station he may be
Virtuous and happy.
WIL. Mother, let me stay
And I will be so good.
AME. My darling, yes;
Thou shalt not leave me, not for the wide world.
LORD GLEN. Thou need'st not clasp him so against thy bosom;
I am no ruffian, from a mother's breast
To pluck her child.—Amelia, as his arms

Wind round thy neck, so thou a thousand times
Hast clung to mine; as on his snowy brow
Thy lips are sealed, so mine a thousand times
Have pressed thy face; with such a love, Amelia,
As thou dost feel for him.

AME. Oh, father! father!

LORD GLEN. Thou wast a motherless babe, and I to thee
Supplied both parents. Many a night have I
Hung over thy sick bed, and prayed for thee
As thou dost pray for him. And thou, Amelia,
Didst love me then.

AME. Did love! Oh never, never
Can such love pass away! 'Tis twined with life.

LORD GLEN. Then after eighteen years of tender care,
Fond hopes, and fonder fears, didst thou not fly
From me, thy father, with a light gay youth,
A love of yesterday? Didst thou not leave me
To die of a broken heart? Amelia, speak!
Didst thou not?

AME. Father! this is worse than death.

LORD GLEN. Didst thou not? Speak.

AME. I did. Alas! I did.

LORD GLEN. Oh, miserably have my days crept on
Since thou didst leave me! Very desolate
Is that proud splendid home! No cheerful meals;
No evening music; and no morning rides
Of charity or pleasure. Thy trim walks
Are overgrown; and the gay pretty room,
Which thou didst love so well, is vacant now;
Vacant and desolate as my sick heart.
Amelia, when thou saw'st me last, my hair
Was brown as thine. Look on it now, Amelia.

MAU. My lord, this grief will kill her. See, she writhes
Upon the floor.

LORD GLEN. And must I go still desolate?
I might have found a comfort, had I had
Something to live for still, something to love;—
If she who robbed me of my child had given

Her child instead;—but all is over now!
She would not trust her father. All! farewell!

AME. *(Starting up)*. Take him, whilst I have life to bid thee! Take him!

Nay, cling not to me, boy! Take, take him.—Maurice?

WIL. I will not leave you, mother.

AME. Hush! hush! hush!

My heart is breaking, William.—Maurice, speak!

MAU. Dearest and best, be it as thou hast willed.
I owed thee a great sacrifice Amelia;—
And I shall still have thee!

LORD GLEN. Thou giv'st him, then?

MAU. I do. But for his own sake, good my lord,
Let not my son be taught to scorn the father
He never will forget; and let his mother
See him sometimes, or she will surely die.

AME. I shall die now. My William!

LORD GLEN. Emily!

AME. Ha!

LORD GLEN. My sweet Emily!

AME. We are forgiven!

Maurice, we are forgiven!

LORD GLEN. My own dear child,

My children, bless ye all! Forgive this trial;—
We'll never part again.

THE PAINTER'S DAUGHTER.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

CHARACTERS.

Colantonio del Fiore.
Angelo Solario.
Laura.
Lisabetta.

SCENE—An Artist's Painting-Room—Flower-pieces finished and unfinished on the walls and the easel—A large picture covered with a veil in the front.

THE PAINTER'S DAUGHTER.

COLANTONIO *and* LISABETTA.

COL. Good Lisabetta, know'st thou of my daughter,
Madonna Laura? I have sought in vain
Her chamber and her garden bower.
LISA. She's still
At vespers, Signor.
COL. Ay, I might have guess'd—
My fair and pensive nun! She flies the light
And vain companionship of this gay city;
Shunning alike woman, her gossip—man,
Her vassal; coy, demure, retiring, shy,
Living in Naples here as if the world
Were all made up of the still garden where
My flowers grow, and this cool quiet room
Where my old hand, not yet deprived by age
Of its accustom'd skill, lends them new life
On canvas. But to seek the lonely church,
Where, closely veil'd, at vesper-hour she steals
To muse and pray, my gentle daughter ne'er
Forsakes her home.
LISA. In truth, she is too sad.
But, good padronè, 'tis thy fault. A maid
So fair, so rich, should have been match'd long since

With some gay cavalier. That vow of thine,
That, save a painter—a great painter, none
Should wed Madonna Laura, may perchance
Keep the Madonna Laura long a maid.
For of rare artists some are old, and some
Are wedded, and some love their single state
More than a fair young bride. 'Tis certain none
Hath wooed her to thy heart's content;—and she—
Alas, poor child!—likes none of them.

COL. Sage nurse,
Dost love a secret?

LISA. Ay.

COL. A secret too
That thou may'st tell?

LISA. Canst thou doubt it?

COL. Then listen!
Haste to the jewellers and merchants; furnish
A wardrobe for a princess;—to the cooks,
Confectioners, and spice-men; let us have
A banquet fit for kings;—send round the city
To bid my friends and kindred;—for the morrow
Is Laura's bridal.

LISA. And her husband?

COL. One
Whose name has darted into fame, as the star
Of evening springs to light.

LISA. Hast seen him?

COL. No.
But I have seen the master-work by which
He wooes her;—yonder curtain'd—hark! She comes.
No word of this to her.

Enter LAURA.

My Laura!

LAU. Take
My veil, good nurse; the heat is stifling. [*Exit* LISABETTA.
Father.
What would'st thou of me? Julio says, that twice

Thou call'dst for Laura.
COL. I would say to thee—
Sit here by me, thy hand in mine:—this hand
So soft and warm, yet trembling as it knew
Its destiny, is claim'd, my Laura.
LAU. Claim'd?
COL. Ay, by a lover, dearest.
LAU. Lover!
COL. Say
A husband, sweet one, if it please thee better.
LAU. By whom?
COL. A painter, who hath come from Rome
To seek thy love.
LAU. Love! Do I know him?
COL. No.
LAU. Doth he know me?
COL. He says that he has seen
My beauteous daughter—here's his letter!—Surely
I think he loves thee.
LAU. Loves me! If he did,
I love not him! And wherefore must I wed?
Art weary of me, father?
COL. Sweet one, no!
LAU. Am I a burthen in thy house?
COL. The joy!
The pride! the sunshine!
LAU. Pr'ythee, let me bide
In this dear home, and wear away my days
In ministering to thee. I have been
No thriftless housewife. Trust me, thou wouldst miss
Thine own poor Laura, when some menial hand
Shook up thy pillow, when some menial tread
Broke rudely on thy slumbers—thou wouldst miss
The soft light touch of love. And at thy meals,
Thy solitary meals, and the sweet hour
Of morning meeting, and the tenderer time
That blends a blessing with good-night!—Oh, father,
Why wouldst thou send me from thee?

COL. Didst thou think
I could part from thee? Go to! we are rich
In worldly pelf; thy spouse shall dwell with us
Here in the home thou lov'st. Thou shalt not quit
Thy pretty garden bower, thy myrtle shade
For winter, or the summer walk, where grapes
Hang through the trellis arch amidst their rich
And clustering leaves. Thou shalt dwell here, as now,
In thine own pleasant home, thine old fond father
Blessing thee still at morn and eve. But wed,
Wed, my own Laura! Thou art mine only child,
The child of mine old age, and I would fain
Live thy fair childhood o'er again, would see
Thy beauty multiplied, would taste that fondest
And tenderest ecstacy, a grandsire's love.
Besides, thou know'st my vow. Kings have ere now,
If chronicles say sooth, offer'd their heirs
The prize of valour, of brute strength; I held thee
At higher price, my Laura, when I swore
None but a victor in the noble field
Of Art should win thee, save a painter none
Should call thee wife.

LAU. Alas!

COL. And I have quell'd
The father's natural longing to extend
His race; and, marvelling at thy coldness, joy'd
To see thee turn from the proud cavaliers
Of the gay city, with a gentle scorn
That waved away their wooings as the hand
Fans off the flies in summer time,—have joy'd
To see my virgin flower hang in the shade
From year to year, fresh, dewy, beautiful,
As when it burst the bud, as if no soil
Of the rude world had touched it, scarcely kiss'd
By the hot breath of the sun. But now, my Laura,

[*Uncovering the Picture.*

Look on that picture; needs no practised eye
To scan its beauty. Art sits triumphing

Like nature there, with daylight, life, and youth.
Almost the vital breath hangs on those lips
Of parted coral; almost the warm blood
Glows in the modest cheek; and tender thought
Dwells in the fair broad forehead. 'Tis a young
Madonna. Look at the soft, downcast eye,
The head bent downward! Look! Hast thou ne'er seen
Such features?

LAU. (*To herself.*) 'Tis myself, younger and fairer—
But such as love—And so my braided locks
I wore disparted; so the silken hood,
Intensely blue, lay on my hair. Fool! Fool!
The very puppet of a dream! *He* was
A soldier, a brave soldier!

COL. He who painted
That picture loves thee, claims thee, the rich guerdon
Of excellence in art; with noble pride
He wooes as Theseus erst Hippolyta,
Conquering his lovelier bride.

LAU. Hast seen him?

COL. No.

LAU. His name?

COL. Zingaro.

LAU. (*To herself.*) Fool! fool! fool! to think
Because a dream, or some strange trick of the sense,
Of memory, or fancy, some sweet sound
Passing along the air—I had been sitting
Within the bower he loved, entranced in thought,
Fond dreamy thought of him, through the hot noon,
And then I heard the nightingale afar
Or distant viol from the bay, and straight
Deem'd 'twas his fav'rite air—Fool! fool! His hand
Wielded the sword and shield, and deftly rein'd
The manèged steed! Little he reck'd of brush
Or palette;—then the time!—long, long ere now,
Hath he forgotten his poor Laura! Man
Loves on till hope be dead, then love dies too;
'Tis only woman lays her silly heart

In hope's cold urn, and in that fun'ral nest
Broods o'er her love.

COL. Well! hast thou gazed thy fill?
It likes me, dearest, that with quivering lips,
And mutter'd words, and cheeks with passion pale,
Thou look'st on yonder picture. It hath thaw'd
Thy maiden coldness. I will send forthwith
To summon this Zingaro.

LAU. Father, stay!
Listen! I am about to tell a tale
Too long unuttered. Listen! Thou hast talk'd
Of maiden coldness. I have loved, I love
With all the ardour that our burning sun
Strikes into woman's heart. Nay, start not, father,
Nor put me from thee thus! I'll tell thee all.
Thou hast no cause to blush for me; I loved
Deeply and fervidly, but chastely, father,
As ever priestess of old Rome adored
Her god Apollo.

COL. Whom?

LAU. Dost thou remember
Young Angelo Solario, the son
Of our rich neighbour?

COL. He! Why he hath left
Naples these ten years!

LAU. And for ten long years
Dwelt in my heart.

COL. Ay, I remember now.
The Count Solario once proposed to join
Our children's hands.

LAU. Oh, good old man!

COL. It wrought in me
Some marvel that he would abase his son
To wed a painter's daughter.

LAU. Kind old man!

COL. But I had vow'd thee ev'n before thy birth
To my great art; its votary, if a boy;
If a weak girl, its guerdon. Thus I said

To Count Solario: "Pluck from thy hot son
The sword he loves o'erwell, and bid him wield
The peaceful pencil; then, if Heaven have given
The painter's eye, the painter's hand, and (rarest
And needfullest of all) that inward beam,
Genius, of painter and of poet bright
And glorious heritage!—Then when, matured
By time and patient toil, he shall achieve
Some master-work of art, then bid him come,
And he shall woo my daughter." The old man
Laugh'd; and the gallant—I bethink me now
That Angelo was there—curl'd his proud lip,
And fix'd his flashing eye, and tightlier grasp'd
His jewell'd sword.

LAU. Spake he?

COL. No word. He went
Forth to the wars that very week; and then
The father died;—Why, Laura, mine, thou wast
A girl when he departed!

LAU. Old enough
To love. The day he said, Farewell, I wrote
Sixteen in my short book of life. Ten years
This very day! Oh, old enough for love!

COL. For fancy, flickering fancy; such as girls
Waste on a momentary toy, a flower,
A linnet, an embroider'd robe.

LAU. For love.
Woman's intense and passionate love. I've seen
Ten times the changing seasons wax and fade,
Have seen the spring-tide of my youth pass by
In absence, hopelessness, despair, and still
The thought within my heart, the voice that lived
Within mine ear, the image in mine eye,
Was Angelo. His loved idea hath been
My sole reality. All waking things,
The common pageants of this work-day world
Pass'd by me as a dream, confused, unmark'd,
Forgotten! Then I lived, then my soul woke,

When in the myrtle arbour, where erewhile
We spent our childish hours, I could sit
Alone up-coiled into myself, and muse
On him, till memory would conjure back
The very image of his sparkling youth
Before mine eyes; the light, elastic form
Whose every motion was a bound, whose walk
A gay curvet, as springy as the pace
Of his own Barbary steed; the face as dark
Even as a Moor's, but brightened by a smile
Vivid as noonday sunshine; eyes that flash'd
An insupportable light; and close black curls
Beneath the plumed cap,—I saw them all!
And in mine ear the very sound would dwell
Of that farewell which was a vow, that voice
Which, in a tone of prophecy, would cry,
" Laura, I'll wed thee yet!"
COL. This is a frenzy.
LAU. Oh, father, it is love!
COL. Laura, my sweet one,
The fault is mine. Thou hast been left o'erlong
Lonely and uncompanion'd, till vain dreams,
And thoughts vainer than dreams, have overborne
Thy better reason. Ten years, and thou hear'st
Nothing of Angelo! or he is dead,
Or thou forgotten.
LAU. Father, listen, father!
Last night—I should have said there was an air,
A rich, yet simple strain, whose burthen well
Became our summer seas; joyous or sad
As the deft singer in his varying mood
Hurried or stayed the measure; always sweet,
Most exquisitely sweet! That air from boyhood
Angelo loved; would carol as he walk'd
Along the streets; sing whilst his plashing oar
Kept time; and ever and anon a snatch
Of the familiar strain might travellers list,
Crossing the sharp sound of his horse's tread.

That strain, by constant and peculiar use,
Became his very own, belonged to him
As her sweet music to the nightingale,
Unmatched of any. From a little child
I knew those notes; for so would Angelo
Summon his fairy playmate;—'twas the lure
Of gamesome innocence, the call of love,
For ten years past unsounded,—till last night,
Ling'ring in pensive musings in my bower,
I heard once more the strain.

COL. A dream! a dream!

LAU. Sure as I live, the sound was there. 'Twas not
The vision which at pleasure fancy calls
Or chases. I arose, I walked; yet still
That air in its own sweetness, each division
Musical as a mermaid's song, was borne
Upon the breeze, though faintlier heard and faintlier
As I receded. It was Angelo,
Or of those noises of the air which oft
Wait round the living, when the parting soul
Of the beloved-one seeks its Heaven,—the knell
Which the Death-angel rings. [*Music without.*

Hark!

COL. I hear nothing.

[*Music without and nearer.*

Ay, now!

LAU. My Angelo, alive or dead,
I will be thine, thine only! [*Music again without.*

Hark again!

COL. I shame to have hearkened to this tale. My Laura.
I tell thee thou art vow'd and dedicate
To genius, to Zingaro.

ANGELO SOLARIO *enters behind, unperceived by either Speaker.*

LAU. I will never

Wed other man than Angelo. Thy vow
Is sacrilegious, father, and unblest
As his, the judge of Israel, his, the king
Of men, whose sacrificial knife drank deep
The innocent blood in Aulis. I have wept
When I have heard the tale of Jephthah's daughter,
Or poor Iphigenia; yet their lot,
Measured with mine was blessedness. They died.
But I should linger out a martyrdom
Of loveless life. There is no law of earth
Or Heaven that vests thee with a power to barter
Thy living child for yon vain shadow. Give
Thy ducats to Zingaro. Stay me not!
I'll to a nunnery—hold me not! Unless
To list my vow that nor by force or fraud
Will I e'er wed—

ANG. (*Advancing.*) Oh, fairest constancy!
Oh, miracle of woman's faith!

LAU. 'Tis he!
His very self! This hand that presses mine,
These eyes that gaze on me—Just so he looked,
Just so he spake. Oh, surely I have dreamt
This ten years' absence! It was yesterday
We parted!

ANG. Loveliest, most beloved, I come
To claim thee.

COL. She is promised.

ANG. To Zingaro?

COL. Even so, good signor.

LAU. Never! Never!

ANG. Sweetest,
Make no rash vows. If thou would'st crown my love,
Thou'lt wed Zingaro. Nay, snatch not away
This struggling hand!—the hand Zingaro won
For Angelo! Hast thou not read me yet?
Must I needs tell thee—

LAU. Oh, no, no, no, no!
Thou art he! Ye are one! And thou for me hast laid

Thy state aside, hast flung away thy sword,
Hast toil'd in silence and in secresy,
For me! for me! Father, speak to him! Father,
Speak to him!

COL. Calm thee, mine own Laura. Signor,
Thou hear'st her: says she sooth? Art thou indeed
The famed Zingaro? Is this master-work
Of painting thine?

ANG. Oh, now I see that work,
That master-work of nature, whose rare beauty
I strove to copy, faint and feeble seems
My portraiture! Such as it is, the piece
Is mine.

COL. My son!

ANG. My father!

COL. Wherefore change
Thy name? and why not say—

ANG. Sir! When I left
Thy presence, even when thou bad'st me wield
The peaceful pencil, and by toil and time
Climb the high steep of art, or ere I wooed
Thy daughter; even as thou spak'st, my soul
Was fix'd to its great purpose, and almost
Had I flung at thy feet my sword, and vow'd
To win the prize or die! yet fear and shame
Master'd my speech, and I went forth resolved
And silent.

COL. Whither didst thou go?

ANG. To Rome,
The shrine of art, on love's own pilgrimage.
My friends and kinsmen deem'd me at the camp;
None, save my father, guess'd—and, when he died,
I was of all forgotten.

LAU. Not of all.

ANG. Of all, save one the faithfullest. Meantime,
A nameless student, day and night I toil'd
For that dear faithful one. From my swart skin
My laughing comrades called me oft in jest

Zingaro,* till at last the name of scorn
Was crown'd by fame. Oh, very dear to me
The name that won thee, Laura!
COL. Will she wed
Zingaro?
LAU. Will I!—Father, was my love
A frenzy?
COL. Sweet one, love and constancy
Have wrought this blessedness. Receive thy bride,
Thy twice-won bride, Zingaro!
LAU. He but gives
My hand. My heart is Angelo's.
ANG. Mine! Mine!
Both mine!

* Gipsy.—The groundwork of the foregoing scene will be found in Mr. Mills' very interesting "Travels of Theodore Ducas." I have only taken the liberty to change the name of my hero from Antonio to Angelo. A similar anecdote has been related of several painters, especially of Quintin Matsys, the celebrated blacksmith of Antwerp—though I have for obvious reasons preferred the Italian version of the story. What could one do with a blacksmith and a Dutchman, and a man who painted misers counting their gold?

FAIR ROSAMOND.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

The following scene is chiefly taken from the popular ballad of the same name in Bishop Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry. Some anachronisms will, I fear, be found, besides those contained in the beautiful legend which forms the groundwork of my story; but at an age so remote, and with a subject, to say the best of it, apocryphal, a strict adherence to the old tradition will hardly be demanded.

CHARACTERS.

Henry II., King of England.
Queen Eleanor.
Fair Rosamond.
Constance, *Mabel* } *Rosamond's Women.*
Archers, &c., attending on the King and Queen.

SCENE—An Apartment in Rosamond's Bower at Woodstock.

FAIR ROSAMOND.

Enter CONSTANCE *meeting* MABEL.

CON. Alone, good Mabel? Hath not our fair lady
Won homeward from the chase?
MABEL. But now I left her
In the great hall, prattling right merrily
To Pierce, the white-haired forester, the old
And merry forester. Hark! thou may'st hear
Her sweet wild laughter now, echoing along
The gallery. Hark! hark! How like a gay
And reckless child! and how the old man's voice
Comes chuckling in between!
CON. What makes he here?
MABEL. He came to warn our lady to retire
Within her secret bower, and triply guard
The outer gate. He dreads a quick surprise
From powerful foes.
CON. And Reginald Fitz-Urse,
The valiant captain of the guard, hath gone
This very morn to Warwick, to attend
His dying father. None remain save raw
And ignorant striplings. What hath scared old Pierce?
MABEL. A clerk of Oxford passing through the chase
Brought tidings that last night a royal train
Reposed within the city, he believed

The Queen herself—but Lady Rosamond
Had yester-eve fond missives from the King,
Whom she expects at noon; and makes a mock
Of Pierce's warning, mimicking the dull
And purblind scholar who mistook her bright
And peerless Henry for the stiff and gaunt
And withered Eleanor; dancing for glee,
Clapping her hands, and laughing at each turn
Of her quick fancy, gentle as young lambs
Midst all her gambols, and more beautiful
Than blossoms of the field. 'Tis a light heart.

CON. Think'st thou so?

MABEL. Surely.

CON. Hast thou dwelt with her
A two months' space, and deem'st her light of heart?

MABEL. Full surely. Grant that sometimes she will weep
The long day through, and watch the tedious night,
Yet soon the veriest trifle will relume
Her smile of joy.

CON. Ay, for an hour, and then
To tears again. She bore a light heart, Mabel,
When I first knew her in her father's halls.
Oh, what a peerless flower the spoiler's hand
Marred in the cropping!—poor, poor Rosamond!

MABEL. Sure she is happy when King Henry comes.

CON. Ay, then, for with idolatry so blind
She loves her royal lover, that each look,
Each thought, each feeling is absorbed in that
Fond worship. In those brief and stolen hours
Fair Rosamond is happy; but they leave
Remorse behind. She comes.

Enter ROSAMOND.

ROSA. How now, good maidens!
Ye are sad to-day. Constance, hath Mabel told thee
Of Pierce and that same learned clerk? I've laughed
Till I'm a-weary, girl.

CON. Yet, gracious lady,

Were it not wiser to withdraw awhile
Within the secret bower?

ROSA. Dost thou believe
That legend, Constance? Hath thy woman's fear
So mastered thee that thou too dost mistake
King Henry's plumed helm for the starched coif
Of haughty Eleanor? And yet I thank thee,
Thy fears spring from thy love. Go take my purse
To good old Pierce; the faithful wretch is full
Of honest care. [*Exit* CONSTANCE.

Now reach my broidery, Mabel,
The flowered scarf. Last night I dreamt of flowers.
What may that dream denote?

MABEL. Good, surely, Madam.

ROSA. Chiefly of roses.

MABEL. Certes, lady, good.

ROSA. 'Twas looking on the scarf reminded me
Of that gay dream. Methought I was a spirit
In a bright world made up of sun and flowers,
A lonely spirit; and my task to deck
A vast triumphal temple, such as pilgrims
Tell of in far-off countries; to entwine
Rich garlands round its thousand fluted shafts
Of whitest alabaster. There I sate
Framing my wreaths profuse of various flowers—
For every flower was there of every hue
And of all seasons;—there I sat and sang,
Bathed in the fragrance of light sunny showers,
And plied my joyful task; or gladlier rose
And flitted on light pinions, round and round
The snowy columns twisting single wreaths,
Or richly interlacing, or from shaft
To shaft suspending the superb festoon
Like an inverted rainbow. There they hung
Unwithered, fresh, as on the parent bough,
Nourished by the sweet air; and there I plied
My task unwearied—till the robin's song
Rang through the casement and awakened me:

Now what may that dream bode?

MABEL. Good, good, dear lady.

ROSA. Say'st thou so, wench? 'Tis a fair augury.
Where hast thou laid the threads of gold? Will that
Be like the Pensée?—So the Normans call
The pretty blossom, but our English maids
Give it a dearer name, the sweet heart's-ease.
This scarf is for King Henry. I must not
Forget the heart's-ease.—Constance loiters long.

MABEL. Shall I go call her?

ROSA. No. When she returns
We'll ask her for some merry roundelay,
Some pleasant ditty of Provence; for, Constance,
Staid and demure although she be, hath store
Of mirthful minstrelsy. I would beguile
The hour till Henry comes,—my princely Henry,
My king, my love.

MABEL. He comes to-day?

ROSA. To-day,
At noon to-day—Oh, how I love to speak
Over and over the glad words which tell
His coming, as if that blest time were made
By every repetition doubly sure.
He comes at noon: when yonder shadow cast
From the rich oriel window, even lies
Upon the floor, thou'lt hear the tramp of steeds
And clang of trumpets and the rapid tread
Of his light foot. At noon—not sooner, wench;
For he is punctual as beseemeth one
Whose will is clock to many, nor foreruns
The hour of meeting though 'tis me he meets.
At noon, when yonder sluggish shadow—surely
'Tis fixed in one eternal slope!—lies straight
Upon the floor. How blest shall I be then!
Till then how slow and weary is the pause,
How long the last sad melancholy hour
Of expectation!

MAREL. 'Twill soon pass, dear lady!

ROSA. Pass! Look, how yonder shadow sleeps! 'T had passed
More lightly in the woods midst falling leaves
And short quick flight of birds. But then I might
Have missed him, and so lost sweet precious minutes
Of his brief stay; or have encountered him
Midst the keen gazes of his knightly train,
And so have lost the o'erflowing gush of joy
At our first meeting. In this oriel chamber
He looks to find me still! I'll wait him here.
The shadow stirs not.

MABEL. If thou wouldst but cease
To watch it, gentle lady, or couldst think
On any theme save one—

ROSA. Could think on aught
Save him!—Oh, thou hast never loved!—Could speak
Of aught save Henry, when each moment brings him
Nearer to these fond arms. If thou hadst loved
Thou wouldst have known that I must talk of him
And of him only.

MABEL. Not of thy fair children?

ROSA. Not even of them, Yet would that they were here
My pretty gentle Geoffrey, and that boy
Elder and bolder, my stout William,—he,
Who at some six years old already draws
His father's sword, already flashes forth
His father's spirit—my brave knightly boy!
Oh, would that they were here, to shed fresh charms
On this blest meeting! to make wholly perfect
Their mother's happiness!

MABEL. They dwell apart
By the King's orders?

ROSA. Ay, for their more safety.
The jealous Queen in her stern cruelty
Threatened to seize the innocent babes! and he,
My Henry—Oh, with what tenderness
He won me to resign them! My own Henry!
Lies not the shadow straighter?

MABEL. Somewhat, Madam.
ROSA. 'Twill soon be even. Did I never tell thee
The story of his wooing? Listen, girl,
Sit here and listen. 'Twas a glorious day,
A glorious autumn day, as bright and clear
As this; the small white clouds now softly sailing
Along the deep blue sky, now fixed and still,
As the light western breeze, arose or sank
By fits—A glorious day! I and my maids
Sat by the lakelet in my father's park
Working as we do now; right merrily,
For young and innocent maids are in their nature
Gay as the larks above their heads. The scene
Was pleasant as the season; not a spot
Of the Lord Clifford's wide demesne could vie
With this in beauty. Woods on every side,
Ash, oak, and beech, sloped downward to the clear
And quiet waters, overhung by tufts
Of fern and hazel, and long wreaths of briars,
Only one little turfy bank was free
From that rich underwood—there we sate bending
Over a tapestry loom, until we heard
A horn sound right above us, and espied
A hunter threading the rude path which wound
To our sequestered bower. Oh, what a sight
It was! the manèged steed, white as the foam
Of some huge torrent, fiery, hot, and wild,
Yet reined into a tameness by his bold
And graceful rider, winning with slow steps
His way 'mid those huge trees; now seen, now lost,
Now in bright sunshine, now in deepest shade;
The red autumnal tints of those old woods
Contrasting well the huntsman's snow-white steed
And garb of Lincoln green. No sign bore he
Of prince or king, save in the sovran grace
Of his majestic port, his noble brow,
His keen, commanding eye. My maidens fled
Soon as they saw the stranger.

MABEL. And thou, lady?
ROSA. Why, I too thought to fly, but loitered on
Collecting the bright silks and threads of gold,
Careful excuse that to myself I made
For lingering there, till he approached; and then
When I in earnest turned to go, he stayed me
With such a smile and such a grace, and craved
My aid so piteously, for he had lost
Comrades and hounds and quarry and himself
In that morn's chase, that I was fain to proffer
Guidance to our old castle.
MABEL. He went with thee?
ROSA. No. At Lord Clifford's name he started.—Mabel
Shun thou the lover that shall start to hear
Thy father's name.—With slight excuse he rode
To seek his partners of the chase. But oft
From that day forth we met beside the lake;
And often when November storms came fast,
Driving against the casement, I have wept
Drop for drop with the sky, if my dear father
In his fond care forbad his Rosamond
To brave the raging tempest. All my heart
Was in that bare damp wood and on the bank
Of that dark water, where my lover stood
To wait my coming, patiently as sits
The nightingale beside his brooding mate.
How could I choose but love him?
MABEL. Didst thou know
Thy lover for the king?
ROSA. Not till my love
Had been confessed; then he in turn confessed
The fatal secret. What a coil of wild
And desperate passions woke within my heart,
Fear, shame, and pride, and anger, but true love
O'ermastered all; we fled, and I am here.
MABEL. Alas!
ROSA. Nay, wherefore cry, Alas?—My father—
I must not think of him—Out on thee, wench!

That sigh of thine hath saddened me, hath brought
Fond thoughts of days of old—the blessed days
When I was innocent and happy! Girl,
Thou hast a father, an old white-haired man
Who loves thee. Leave him not, I charge thee, Mabel!
Bring not those white hairs to the grave with shame
For thy foul sin!

MABEL. Oh, weep not, dearest lady!
Look how the shadow hath crept on! and surely
I hear a clamour at the gate— [*Noise without.*
A tumult
Even in the Hall. Dost thou not hear?

ROSA. 'Tis he,
My king! my Henry! Quick, let's meet him!—No,
I must first dry my tears—Yet did I ever
Meet Henry without tears?—Where loiters he?

MABEL. And what may mean that cry? The noise comes near;
Heaven grant that all be well!

Enter CONSTANCE.

ROSA. Hath aught befallen
The King! Is Henry safe? Speak! Speak!

CON. Fly, Madam,
Fly to the secret chamber. Our brave knights
Are overpowered; and we undone. The Queen
Approaches.

Enter QUEEN ELEANOR, *Guards, &c.*

EL. Minion, she is here. Fly not,
Proud concubine.

ROSA. I think not of it.

EL. Guard
Each entrance well that she escape not. Women,
Stand from about her. Wherefore kneel'st thou there?

ROSA. For mercy—Oh, thy looks are terrible—
For mercy and for pardon.

EL. Dar'st thou kneel

To me for pardon? Dost thou know me?
ROSA. Yes
Thou art a Queen, a mighty Queen, but still
A woman!—Women should be pitiful,
Great Queens should pardon.
EL. I am Henry's wife.
Dost ask for mercy now? Ay, sob, and shiver,
And dash thy face against the ground, and lie
Prostrate before me, minion. 'Tis my hour—
(To one of her Attendants.) Bring in the bowl, good Hubert!
I have been
A mockery of a Queen, whilst thou hast borne
The power, the state, the reverence; enshrined
Within thy bower, like some vile Indian idol,
Partner of Henry's heart, and more than partner
Of the fool people's love. The very courtiers,
Grey-bearded counsellors, and valiant knights,
And learned bishops, all have brought their suits
To Rosamond, fair Rosamond—I'll mar
That boasted beauty. Bring the bowl, I say.—
Where be her sons?
ROSA. *(Starting up.)* Oh, Heaven is merciful!
They are not here! They are safe! Their innocent lives
Are spared! I thank thee, Lord, that in thy pity
Refused the mother's prayer. My boys are safe!
EL. I'll reach them, harlot, yet.
ROSA. Oh no, thou wilt not
Thou art a mother; thou hast boys as young
As mine, ay, and as fair. I saw one once,
A sweet and gracious child, he smiled upon me—
EL. He knew thee not.
ROSA. He smiled upon me, Queen,
And in my heart I blest him. 'Twas thy Geoffrey.
If e'er thou meet my children, think on him,
And thou'lt not harm them. Not to be in truth
King Henry's wife, could I have injured him.
EL. Peace! smooth and wily serpent! I came hither
Not to hold parley, but to execute

A needful justice on a desperate sinner.
ROSA. We are all sinners.
EL. Bring the cup. Drink that,
Or bare thy bosom to the sword.
ROSA. 'Tis poison!
EL. Swift, sudden poison. Drink!
ROSA. Not yet! Not yet!
The sternest justice yields some little pause
Betwixt the sentence and the death. Grant thou
Some respite for dear charity. An hour!
Only an hour!
EL. Drink, minion.
ROSA. I must die,
I knew that when I saw thee; but unshriven,
Without the rite of Holy Church, or prayer
Of pious priest! I ask thee not for life,
Albeit life is precious, I but crave
Such ghostly comfort as is given to thieves
And murderers on the scaffold.
EL. Drain the bowl—
Or seize her, archers, and with your sharp swords
Let out her life.
ROSA. Alas! for womanhood
Yield me not up to those stern men! I'll drink
The poison. Now farewell to hope, and joy,
And love the latest passion.

[*She drinks the poison, and a Trumpet is heard without.*

EL. Hark! that trumpet!
ROSA. I know the sound—The King! the King! Too late
Thou com'st, my Henry.
EL. Ay! The bowl is drained.
I am triumphant. Let King Henry come.
My great revenge is sure, and for my fate
I reck not.

Enter KING HENRY, *and Guards.*

HEN. Wherefore be the warders changed
And Reginald Fitz-Urse—Queen Eleanor!

I read the riddle now—but I am here
To guard thee, Rosamond, and clear thy bower
Of these stern visitants. Avoid the castle
All ye of the Queen's train! Sir Hugh de Clinton,
See that my bidding be obeyed, and line
The courts with my stout yeomen.

[*Exeunt the* QUEEN'S *Guards.*

So! Fair Madam
I pr'ythee back to Windsor! I am loath
To use a husband's power—ay, or a King's—
But tempt me not!—I know thee, Eleanor,
And so far can endure—no farther. Back
To Windsor, Queen! Yon gentle trembler sits
Shivering like a new caged bird. Depart
I warn thee, Madam! For as I'm a knight,
As I'm a man, I cannot choose but soothe
The lovely wretch that suffers for my sin.
Wilt thou not bid me welcome, sweet? nor thank
The precious chance that brought me here to turn
Hatred and malice into love and joy?

ROSA. Joy!

HEN. Did she speak? Her gladsome voice is changed;
And that sweet word rang like a knell! Take comfort,
My Rosamond.

ROSA. Comfort! But 'tis a comfort
To see thee once again, once ere we part.

HEN. Who hath dared to speak of parting? Who could part
Two hearts that loved like ours? Who dare to sever
King Henry from his love?

EL. A mightier King,
The mightiest of the mighty—Death. Yon bowl
Hath well avenged me.

HEN. Poisoned! Fiend, accurst,
Full of all vice that woman ever knew,
Wanton in youth, and jealous in thine age,
And now a murderess, look to find a vengeance

Stupendous as thy crimes!
ROSA. Henry!
HEN. My Rose,
My murdered Rose, how could I waste a thought
On aught save thee! Go ransack all the land
For costly antidotes, search all the earth
For skilful leeches! Say, I'll give my crown
To him that saves my Rosamond. My fairest,
Thou shalt not die.
EL. The crowns of the whole earth
Could not preserve her life an hour. The draught
Was deadly. Thou wilt see her boasted charms
A loathsome mass in thine embraces.
HEN. Slay
Yon fiend! She maddens me.
ROSA. Nay, touch her not.
Forgive me, 'tis the first time I e'er crossed
A wish of thine—She must not die.
HEN. Had she
A heart, those words would kill her. Oh, my Rose,
That I could die with thee!
ROSA. No! thou must live
For England, for thy children. My poor boys!
Could I have seen them—send not, 'tis too late!
A little space, and thy poor Rosamond
Shall join her kindred clay. My boys! say to them
That with her parting breath their mother blessed—
Oh, no! no! no! I have no right to bless
As virtuous mothers have. I am a curse
To all my kindred, even to them who drew
Their being from my crime. Let them forget
Their mother's very name; and breed them humbly—
Promise me that, my Henry.
HEN. Rosamond,
They shall be bred as Princes.
ROSA. Oh, no! no!
Humbly, most humbly. I was ne'er ambitious
'Midst all my sins. I loved thee for thyself,

Not for thy rank. 'Twas not the king I worshipped,
But Henry, mine own Henry! Breed them humbly,
And say to William (for his mounting spirit
Already fears me) that he take no vengeance
For this rash deed.

HEN. He shall not need. That task
Is mine.

ROSA. That task is one forbid by Heaven.
I do conjure thee, Henry, by the love
Thou bear'st me, for the weal of thine own soul—

EL. Go to, I fear him not.

HEN. I thought to slay her,
But that were mercy. She shall live. Why leave
My circling arms, my Rosamond? Why drag
Thy trembling form towards yon murderess?

ROSA. Madam!
Nay, stay me not—'twill ease my heart. I am dying
Untimely midst my sins, unshriven, unblest,
By priest or bell, a sinner! yet one duty
Even I may fill at this last hour, to part
In charity.

EL. Dar'st thou to pardon me,
Harlot, adulteress?

ROSA. Queen, for that foul sin,
I crave thy pardon! Oh, forgive me, Madam,
As I forgive—

HEN. She sinks! Off with yon fiend
To prison! quick! off with her!

[*The* GUARDS *take* ELEANOR *away*.
My beloved,
How art thou?

ROSA. Easier.

HEN. Oh, she'll live! She'll live!
No; no. Her cheeks grow whiter; and her hands
Cold, cold; and scarce my trembling arms sustain
Her sinking form.

ROSA. I'm easier.

HEN. Is there aught

That I can do to pleasure thee? My sweet one,
Speak to me.

ROSA. My poor children!

HEN. Are they not
My children, Rosamond? Those boys will be
My only comfort. I shall love them, dearest,
Too fondly.

ROSA. And my father, my poor father!

HEN. He shall be mine.

ROSA. I'm easier. Turn my face
Toward the south. The sunshine from the oriel
Lies straight upon the floor! 'Tis noon.—The hour
I longed for, and I've heard thy voice and felt
The pressure of thy lip, ay, and been clasped
To that fond heart! We have been sinful, Henry,
And therefore are we doomed; have loved too well,
And therefore—Oh, that this poor life of mine
May expiate our crimes! that thou may'st be
Happy and fortunate!

HEN. Pray for thyself,
Sweetest! What happiness is left for me
When thou art gone? Think but of thee.

ROSA. I cannot
If sin it be to love, that sin cleaves to me—
Henry! my king! I'm faint.

HEN. She falls! she dies!
Ay, wet her temples with that essence.—Rosamond!
Is she gone, Constance? Is the spirit fled?
My eyes are dizzy. One kiss more! Her breath
Is gone; her lips are cold;—She's dead, quite dead;
And I am left alone and desolate.
My Rosamond, my love!

ALICE.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

The scenery of this little Drama is taken from the beautiful grounds of the Great House at Arborfield, near Reading. The characters and the story are entirely fictitious.

CHARACTERS.

Mrs. Neville.
Henry.
Alice.

SCENE.—A Path by the side of a River. Henry in the foreground; Mrs. Neville and Alice under some trees at the side.

ALICE.

HEN. This is the spot so loved, so long unseen!
The very spot! the brimming Loddon here,
Winding through grassy fields, gives back the blue
And dappled sky so brightly, that it seems
Part of another Heaven. There is the mill
Thwarting its course—the old and rustic mill,
With its white low-browed cot, and wooden bridge
That seems, yet is not, dangerous; there the church,
With its square tower; and nearer, that vast pile,
Whose pointed roofs and porch and pinnacles
And carved and massive windows give a date,
Prouder than the huge oaks which overtop
The clustered chimneys—cold and cheerless now!
No wreathing smoke bids welcome to the old
Ancestral hall, vacant and desolate,
But beautiful—how beautiful! The shrubs
Grown into trees and blossoming profuse,
As in those flowery forests where they live
Seen but of Heaven.—Ah! beneath the trees—
'Tis they! It must be they! That slender woman,
Bending her fair and patient cheek o'er work
Scarce whiter than her hands; the widow's cap;
The close grey gown; the undying loveliness;—
It is herself! And that young graceful girl,

Nor child nor woman, who in colourless
And sculptural beauty stands, severely pure,
Pale as a water-lily—that is Alice!
Her eyes—would I could see her eyes!—are sealed
On that unconscious book.—I'll speak to them.
[*Advancing to* MRS. NEVILLE *and* ALICE.
Madam, I pray you pardon me!—This path,
So green and overgrown—doth this path lead
To Cleveland Hall?
MRS. NE. It doth—alas! it did.
The hall is silent now and tenantless;
None treads the moss-grown road.
HEN. What, is there none
Within the inhospitable walls to cheer
The poor man's heart? Not one to ope the gate
To curious strangers, or the humbler wants
Of the sick, way-worn traveller? What, none?
Not even a servant?
MRS. NE. None. You lean your head
Against the trees, as sick or weary too.
Oh, rest you here awhile! Find such a seat
As mine, 'midst these old roots; and if you need
Refreshment—
HEN. Stir not, Madam! my weak words
May ill express strong gratitude. To sit
Here is the perfectest repose; amid
Such shade, such freshness, where the greenness falls
Like dew upon the burning eyes; such smells
Swinging from the lime blossom, and the breath
Of flaunting woodbines; and such coil of bees
Gathering their harvest. It is worth a life
Of that dull common joy which men call bliss
So to be weary, and to find such rest.
MRS. NE. You come from far?
HEN. From Oxford here, to meet
The heir of yon fair hall.
AL. Ah! he knows *him!*
HEN. (*Aside.*) Now those stars shine upon me!

AL. You know *him!*
Mother, he knows Lord Claremont.
MRS. NE. Oh, the book
Is closed, which this long morning hath absorbed
Thy every sense—thou hast not seen thy young
And dear companions, when they wooed thee forth
To the gay hay-field; hast not heard my voice—
Not though that voice called Alice.
AL. Not heard thee!
Mother, not thee!—Oh, fie upon thy charm,
Sweet poesy! Not heard thy voice!
HEN. What lay
Hath such entrancing power? [*She gives him the Book.*
The Faerie Queen!
Oh, gentle poet of the summer sky,
The fresh air, the green earth! how suited thou
To this wild pastoral scene, and this young hand,
Trembling with modesty!
MRS. NE. She'll hang all day
Over that tale of Una.
HEN. But this shower,
Of snowy rose-leaves—sure it was her mark!—
Dropt from that tenderest page, where Britomart,
Pining for love, heart-sick and desolate,
Is by her old nurse comforted and cheered,
And hushed to sleep like an o'erweary babe.
Euripides himself, in the famed scene
Of Phædra—no, nor Shakespeare, when he melts
The very soul with Juliet's tender woe—
Touched not more truly the witch-notes of love
Than that old simpleness.
MRS. NE. Yet Britomart—
Alice, it was a silly maid that loved
A picture.
AL. Mother, no! Oh, no! She loved
The high idea, the bright imagining
Of her own soul. Gentleness, valour, truth,
And lofty faith, and noble thought—'twas these

She loved; the magic image did but clothe,
But lend a form to the diviner mind
Which her pure fancy moulded.
HEN. (*Aside.*) Now she stoops
To kiss her mother's hand!—Sweet artifice
Of maiden shame, to hide the crimson glow
Her ardent speech hath brought upon the cheek
That was all lily! (*Aloud.*) Go not! [*Exit* ALICE.
MRS. NE. She is gone
To join her youthful comrades.
HEN. Ay, she moves
Towards them with a gentle dignity,
As yonder cygnet glides along the stream.
Look! what a picture 'tis to see her pause
Under the brow of that lone summer-house
Which overhangs the water; overhung
With ivy and wild woodbine; backed with firs
So old and vast and shadowy, that they lend
A blackness to the deep, rank grass; and crowned
With poplars of such growth, such spiral height—
The stately columns of eternal Rome
Matched not the pair of living monuments
That shoot their tapering heads into the sky.
She pauses there, the beautiful!—amidst
That beauty, lifting her fair hand to shade
The light from those blue eyes; she passes now
Beneath the firs; she disappears. Yon scene—
Hath she not left a track of brightness there,
That living sunbeam?—Yon fair scene is made
For happiness.—You sigh.
MRS. NE. Oh, once it was!
Once—but that beauty now strikes to my soul
A shivering chillness—Oh, it smiles upon me,
As the cold moon upon the colder grave.
Thou know'st Lord Claremont—that fair hall once owned
Another master. Hast thou never heard
The tale of shame and sorrow?
HEN. I have heard,

Darkly, mysteriously, enough to wake
Deep pity. Wouldst thou—Stranger as I am,
I dare not ask—

MRS. NE. Stranger although thou be,
There is a pity in thy voice, thine eyes,
Thy smile, that looks like comfort; thou art born
To listen to sad stories. Didst thou ever
Hear of Sir Edward Mortimer?

HEN. The grandsire
Of this young Lord? the master of yon grand
And reverend pile? Often.

MRS. NE. He was a man
Of that free spirit, which doth scatter bliss
As winds the summer blossom. In his eye
Dwelt mirth, and kindness in his speech, and love
In his warm heart—love of all human kind.
Something men spake of wildness in his youth;
But when, after long travel, he brought home
A lovely lady and two cherub babes,
Seemed not a wiser or a better man.

HEN. And she?

MRS. NE. She was a thing of life and light
And beauty. Such a vision as erst filled
The dreamy soul of Guido, when he drew
His bright Aurora. Such a brilliant flush
Of health, and joy, and youth—eternal youth!
Year after year rolled on, and stole no charm
No smile from that fair woman. Strangers saw her
Propped on her son's supporting arm, or throwing
Her white hand round her daughter's waist, and deemed
She was their younger sister. Oh, how proud
That noble son was of her peerless grace!
With what a sweet and tender flattery
He spake, and with what smiling blushes she
Would listen! 'Twas a house of love. The daughter—

HEN. Was she not like thy Alice?

MRS. NE. Ay, as like
As two white roses. Thou canst scarce have seen

The Lady Claremont? Thou art all too young.
HEN. I've seen her portrait, where young Purity
Is pictured to the life. She sits upon
A rock by the sea-shore, her starry eyes
Fixed on the gloomy sky, as if to wait
The raging of the storm.
MRS. NE. It came! It came!
Poor Mary Mortimer! almost a child,
Lord Claremont saw and loved her; she loved him;
And they were wedded. After a brief year
Of perfect bliss he died, and she returned
To the paternal home with one fair boy,
To see her father die.
HEN. Alas! alas!
MRS. NE. Sigh not for them that died—Sigh not for them—
They were the happy. Years had passed away,
And grief was gone, another Edward ruled
Within the old hereditary hall—
Another kinder, dearer—all built up
Of dignity and honour. He had wooed
And wedded a young maiden, only rich
In love. The gentle countess and her boy
Dwelt with them, and his mother with her looks
Of beauty, her glad voice, her step of youth,
Oh, how the days flew then, when I—for I
Am that most wretched wife that was most blest!
Oh, how the days flew by, whilst Alice clung
Around my knee, half jealous when she saw
My William at my breast; or tottered round
Those giant trees, or on the velvet lawn
Rolled in her joy, lisping her half-learnt words
To the dear cousin, whose sweet serious eyes
Pursued her every motion! kind and frank,
And noble boy! I seem to see him now,
With his bright face peeping among the boughs
Of yonder sweet briar, whilst my fairy girl
Sought her dear playmate, and the summer sun

Declining, streamed a glory round her form;
And I stood watching them almost with tears—
So the deep gladness stirred me—when across
Her lovely childish voice, and the gay laugh
Of the hidden boy, came quick, shrill piercing cries
Of sudden woe; and rushing to the house,
I saw that beauteous mother on the floor,
Pale, speechless, prostrate, writhing; whilst her son,
With folded arms, and withering eyes, looked on;
And her distracted daughter shrieked in gusts
Of helpless agony. Why shak'st thou thus?

HEN. Man is not made of stone. Be brief. Even now
I hear her screaming! Oh, be brief!

MRS. NE. The boy
Had followed me; and trembling with the new
Strange sense of misery, seized my husband's hand,
And looked up in his face. Then, then he burst
From dreadful silence to more dreadful speech,
Cursing the mother at his feet, the child
Within his hand, the blessed light of day,
And life, and love! Darkly the tale of woe
Came from him. That fair, panting, crouching thing,
Quivering beneath her shame, she had confessed
Her frailty. Not till after Edward's birth
Did his dead father wed her. He had been
An innocent usurper. At one word
We lost our name, our wealth, our very home.
Delay had maddened him; before the sun
Was set, we and our children had passed forth
From this fair heritage, poor wanderers
Upon the earth. The gentle heiress staid,
Death-struck with the disgrace that seemed to stain
Even her white purity. In one short month
Her passing-bell had knolled.

HEN. Poor—poor—but she,
The wretchedest, the mother?

MRS. NE. Ere she rose
From the ground where she had plunged her shame,

Her brown hair turned to white. She died not; youth
And joy and beauty died; but she lives on
In penitence.

HEN. And he?

MRS. NE. Oh, what a slow
And weary death is grief when it contends
With manhood's healthful prime! We wandered long
Through many lands. He could not bear the sight
Or sound of aught familiar—his own name
Was as a dagger to him; every smile
Of his unconscious son a deeper stab:
Only my gentle Alice—her he loved—
Her only! till at last his heart grew strong
As his frame weakened, and he longed once more
To see the hall—'Twas speedy then—He lies
Under yon yew-tree. I have never left—
I cannot leave—

Re-enter ALICE.

AL. Mother!—Doth she not weep?—
Ah me! that tears should sadden such an hour!—
Mother! oh, smile upon me! I bring news
Of joy.—He comes to-day—this very day—
It is his birthday. I am come for flowers—
Doth not Lord Claremont love them?

HEN. Yes; but most
The pure white rose.

AL. Look how it blossoms here
Amid the flaunting briar—the purest rose.
We shall soon fill the basket.

MRS. NE. Claremont comes,
The heir, to take his state, to fill the hall
With revelry; and William—my poor boy!—
Thou art Lord Claremont's friend—canst thou forgive
A mother's tenderness?

HEN. Madam, each word
Each patient tear of thine drew answering drops
From my sad heart. I knew, as Claremont knew,

Imperfectly, the story of his race.
Oh! it has made the grief of his young life,
His splendid orphanage, to bear the weight
Of wealth which should be yours; to feel your woe,
To fear your hatred.

AL. Hatred! what, to him?
The kindest, noblest, best! Hatred to him!
And from my mother! And 'tis thou, his friend
That talk'st so! Chide him, mother. But thou know'st not,
Thou canst not know, how exquisitely one
Claremont and goodness are. We were so poor
Till Claremont succoured us; a stripling then,
And under a stern guardian's tutelage,
He gave up every costly gaud of youth
For us. Nay, that were little. He sought out
Poor William in his distant school; he wrote
To me with such a graciousness; he sent
Gifts such as brothers to their sisters send—
Books, music, flowers: this pretty basket—see
How like a bee-hive the bright straw is wrought—
This basket came from him. And thou canst talk
Of hatred!

HEN. Happiest! happiest!

MRS. NE. She is right;
The passing pang is o'er: I cannot grieve
To see the noblest of a noble race
Even in my husband's seat.

AL. Would he were here!
Mother, shall we not know him? I remember,
Do I not, mother, his dark curling hair,
And his mild serious eyes and rosy cheeks,
And how I used to love him!

MRS. NE. Wilt thou tell him
All this?

AL. Why should I not? and yet sometimes
I have a fluttering at my heart—an awe—
A sinking.—Is it fear? 'Twere wron g to fear
Such goodness: yet, in sooth, I tremble, mother;

I know not why. If he were gentle—like—
If he would take my hand, and only say,
Alice.

HEN. *(Taking her hand.)* My cousin Alice! Fly me not, Alice!

AL. Lord Claremont!

HEN. Nay, thy Henry, sweet one.
It was the first word that thou spakest, Alice;
Do not forget it now.—Forgive me, Madam,
That I thus stole upon ye! Oh, forgive
My deeper but unwilling guilt! At length
I can be just. The old ancestral hall,
The wide demesne, are thine. Within an hour
Thy gentle William will be there to fill
His father's seat—the heir. Oh, thank me not:
I am still rich in my paternal wealth—
A beggar still in love. I have no mother—
Be thou one to me: let thy William call
Me brother.

AL. And poor Alice?

HEN. 'Tis through her
That I would claim that title.

MRS. NE. My dear son!

HENRY TALBOT.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

They who are acquainted with the neighbourhood of Marlow, may perhaps recognise Seymour Court as the scene of this little Drama. It is scarcely necessary to say that the characters and the story are altogether fictitious.

CHARACTERS.

Henry Talbot.
Sir Francis Mordaunt.
Eleanor, Talbot's Sister.
Louisa, his Ward.

SCENE.—An elegant Drawing-room, with windows to the ground, opening on a Terrace, ornamented with roses, &c.

HENRY TALBOT.

ELEANOR *and* MORDAUNT *entering.*

EL. Sir Francis Mordaunt, to a mournful house
I bid you welcome! But you bring us comfort—
His truest friend, his dearest! only you
Would he rejoice to see. When I first heard
Your late return from Italy, there rushed
Over my heart a gladness, a strange feeling,
That glowed like hope.

MOR. This is a sad, sweet welcome.
He is no better, then?

EL. Oh, no!

MOR. And what
Is his disease?

EL. A settled melancholy,
That doth consume his body; a decay
Even at the noble heart.

MOR. The cause?

EL. I know not.

MOR. Oh, it must be some rooted malady
That works thus in him! Never can I join
Sadness and Henry Talbot. When we parted,
One little year ago, I gazed on him
As he stood on the sea-beach, in all the pride

Of youth and manly beauty, his bright glance
Pursuing the swift vessel, and I thought,
If ever happiness find rest on earth,
She dwells in that fine form. High birth, high fortune,
High talent, high pursuit, the general praise,
The general love—for his sweet graciousness
Commanded hearts,—and, better still than this,
Domestic bliss, affection, friendship, love;
And such a power to feel and give delight,
Such deep humanity, such a fine sense
Of beauty and of virtue! Set aside
His one infirmity of sudden anger,
As suddenly forgotten, and redeemed
By instant penitence and generous shame,
And he might be the ideal of a man,
The standard all look up to.

EL. Such he was:
You paint him to the life. How proud was I—
Too proud—of that dear brother! You will find
A sadly altered man.

MOR. He used to be
The very model of true cheerfulness;
A gay and open spirit, which did feed
Upon its own pure thoughts. All mirth, all smiles!

EL. He hath forgot to smile.

MOR. Withal so kind—
So exquisitely kind!

EL. That he is still;
Kindness and he are so incorporate,
That death alone can part them. My dear brother!

MOR. Such love as thine would once have soothed all ills.
How long hath this change been?

EL. Oh, many months!
Ever since that summer evening on the Thames—
That fatal August evening,—when their boat
Upset, and Lionel Grey, his foster-brother,
Was most unhappily drown'd. My brother, too,
Striving in vain to save him, almost lost

His life. He dived for the corse, and with the corse
Was brought out motionless. A fever follow'd—
A fever on the brain:—Oh, the black horrors
Of that long dream! Those horrors passed away!
But a dark cloud remains.

MOR. The consequence
Of a long fever. He must change the scene;
Must woo the sweet breath of the south; must go
To lovely Italy. I will return
With him, with you.

EL. Nought can persuade him hence;
And surely—(it is terrible to say,
To think, to feel!)—too surely this disease
Is of the mind, the heart. Something doth weigh—
Thou art my brother's friend, and I to thee
Speak as a brother—something—oh, it breaks
My heart to think of it!

MOR. I'd stake my life
That he is blameless.

EL. Just so have I felt
A thousand times. But then he speaks wild words,
And my wild fear—oh, free me from that fear,
And I will worship thee! And comfort him,
I do beseech thee, comfort him, whate'er—
Do not desert him even,—I cannot speak;
But love him! Comfort him! Forsake him not!

MOR. Never. But his best comforters must be
His sister—and one other. Dare I ask,
Was there not one still dearer, whose true love,
Whose faith, whose sympathy—I mean his ward,
The lovely orphan, his betrothed bride.

EL. Poor, poor Louisa! Yes, she still is here.
Poor, poor Louisa!

MOR. Eighteen months have passed
Since I last saw her. Never did I see
A maid so sweet, so fair, so delicate,
Or so devoted—living in his smiles,
As the butterfly in the sunbeam. And so young,

So made for peace and rest and happiness,
As if she were herself some airy creature,
Whom the first storm would shatter. Through this grief
What hath sustained her?

EL. The deceiver, hope.

She watches Henry's cheek, and if a flush
Of the bright treacherous hectic chance to cross it,
Then is she happy; hangs upon his words;
And if one flash burst from the clouded spirit—
One tone of the old love—poor, poor Louisa!
Would that she were afraid! When it does come,
The stroke will kill her.

MOR. Have you then no hope?

EL. Hark! That's his step. Nay, do not rush to meet him;
He cannot bear surprise.—Hark to that step,
So slow, so feeble! He is pausing now
For breath. Alas! alas! is not that step
The very knell of hope?

Enter TALBOT.

Here is our friend,
Brother!

MOR. Dear Talbot!

TAL. Mordaunt, this is kind—
Too kind!

EL. First let us place you on your couch;
Then will we join to thank this kindest friend
For this kind visit. Henry, he is come
To nurse you, to usurp my office, Henry.

MOR. Rather to share it with you. Dearest Talbot,
You must be well.

TAL. Oh, this is kind, too kind!
I am not worthy, I was never worthy
Of such a friend. And now—oh, go! go! go!
Fly me!

MOR. And wherefore?

TAL. Why, to have thee stay

Would be a joy—and joy is not for me.
Forgive me, Mordaunt; I am sick and wayward—
Sick at my soul—but it will soon be o'er.
EL. I will not have thee talk so; good my brother,
This is no gentle welcome—
[*Advancing towards the window with* MORDAUNT, *and speaking to him apart.*]
For a while
Seem not to observe him. This strong passion then
Will pass away.
MOR. Is't frequent?
EL. Yes. (*Aloud.*) Sir Francis,
Your coming is well timed. Do you remember,
When you last honoured us, 'twas at the close
Of a most glorious autumn. Our beech woods
Own'd every tint of gold, from deepest red
To palest yellow. Often would you praise
Their woodland beauty, and as often I
With a proud and boastful spirit bade you come
And gaze on them in May, and see the sunbeams
Wandering across them, with such wondrous charm
Of light and shadow, bringing into life
The unspeakable beauty of their fresh green tops.
This is the very height and prime of May;—
Said the proud boaster, sooth? Go to yon window—
Look on the distant woods.
MOR. To me this view
Is always lovely; loveliest as it is,
Whate'er the season. This smooth sloping lawn
Sprinkled with odorous shrubs, suddenly sinking
Into a steepness so abrupt; the hills
Sweeping away so finely; and between,
Deep in the bottom, the gay pretty town,
Mingled with trees and gardens; the church spire
Lifting its white and taper head amidst
The woody heights that bound the various scene;
And underneath those woods, round that fair town,
Between those hills, the ever-winding Thames—

TAL. Ah!
MOR. Glides like a glittering snake,—
TAL. Oh, true! true! true!
MOR. Coyly, by snatches, at rare intervals
Seen, but diffusing a perpetual sense
Of his bright presence—prince of streams!
TAL. Oh, fatal!
MOR. (*To* ELEANOR.) Alas! is that the grief?
TAL. Oh, fatal! fatal!
Fatal as man's wild passions, as the worm
That never dies! The mirror where black thoughts,
And blacker deeds—What have I said?
EL. My Henry,
Art thou in pain? Didst call me? Wouldst thou aught?
No, didst thou say? Well, I will leave thee, Henry!
(*Apart to* MORDAUNT.) Approach him not;—alone he will o'ermaster
The pang that shakes him. Make as though you heard
Nought what he says. Talk on.
MOR. My heart is full.
EL. And mine—O God! But I have learnt this sad
Hypocrisy, this necessary hardness.
See, he is calmer! I beseech you, talk—
He listens—(*Aloud.*) Then you grant that May is fair
Even as October in our prospect here?
MOR. The picture is as bright. And yet I miss
The autumnal beauty of this arching roof
Of trellis, richly hung with clustering vines,
Tendrils and leaves and fruit, a gorgeous frame
For the fair picture. Sweet it was to gaze—
And sweet it is. You look down on the world
From this calm seat, as from her lofty nest
The ringdove.
TAL. Ay, it is an apt resemblance,
My own sweet sister bird.
EL. Nay, dearest brother,
My nest should be more lowly; I would build
On the ground, and look still upward. There's a farm

Close by—oh we must show it you, Sir Francis—
Which is almost my envy. And it is
The prettiest walk! Through a beech-wood the path,
A wild, rude copse-road, winds, beneath the light
And feathery steps of the young trees, so fresh
In their new delicate green, and so contrasting
With their slim, flexile forms, that almost seem
To bend as the wind passes, with the firm
Deep-rooted vigour of those older trees,
And nobler,—those grey giants of the woods,
That stir not at the tempest. Oh! that path
Is pleasant, with its beds of richest moss,
And tufts of fairest flowers, fragrant woodroof
So silver white, wood-sorrel elegant,
Or light anemone. A pleasant path
Is that; with such a sense of freshness round us,
Of cool and lovely light; the very air
Has the hue of the young leaves. Downward the road
Winds; till beneath a beech, whose slender stem
Seems toss'd across the path, all suddenly
The close wood ceases, and a steep descent
Leads to a valley, whose opposing side
Is crown'd with answering woods; a narrow valley
Of richest meadow land, which creeps half up
The opposite hill; and in the midst a farm,
With its old ample orchard, now one flush
Of fragrant bloom; and just beneath the wood,
Close by the house, a rude deserted chalk-pit,
Half full of rank and creeping plants, with briars
And pendent roots of trees half-covered o'er,
Like some wild shaggy ruin. Beautiful
To me is that lone farm. There is a peace,
A deep repose, a silent harmony
Of nature and of man. The circling woods
Shut out all human eyes; and the gay orchard,
Spreads its sweet world of blossoms, all unseen,
Save by the smiling sky. That were a spot
To live and die in.

MOR. Beautiful it must be;
But fancy makes the charms she tells, as the sunbeams,
Tenderly wandering o'er those distant woods,
Bring out their exquisite tints.
EL. Nay, if you doubt—
Brother, the sun and air to-day are join'd
In a rare compact; 'tis the warmth of June,
With April's balmy breath. Come forth, dear Henry!
We'll put my pony in the garden-chair,
And soon convert this unbeliever. Come!
It will revive you. Let us lead him thither.
You will enjoy this air.
TAL. I am not worthy
To breathe it, Eleanor. That innocent joy
Belongs to the innocent.
EL. Nay, you must come.
I'll call Louisa, and prepare the chaise.
You will not fail us, Henry? [*Exit* ELEANOR.
MOR. Beautiful
Is sisterly love; divinely beautiful
In yonder noble maid. How firm, how gentle,
How like the purity of some old marble
Is she in form and mind! Even her young beauty,
The very language of her lofty brow,
Is queen-like, till she bends to speak to thee,
With such affectionate softness, and a look
So touchingly sweet. Alas! I have no sister.
How blest ye are together!
TAL. Blest we were;
But now—the word is mockery; yet we were
Once blest. You know that we were twins and orphans,
Alone in the wide world, and all the world
To one another. I so proud of her!
And she so fond of me!
MOR. You still so proud;
She still so fond.
TAL. Ay! but the joy is gone,
Once we were call'd alike; look on me now,

And look on her. A red and withering hand
Has pass'd over my youth, and turn'd my blood
To fire. Her care, her grief, her misery,
Am I. 'Twill soon be past.
MOR. Nay, you must live
For that twin sister's sake; to pay her care;
To bless her love,
TAL. I have no right to love;
I am infected. That which was my bliss
Is now my punishment. I have no right
To kindness, hers or yours! or that of one
Whose deeper tenderness doth pierce my heart
As with a dagger. One so patiently,
So exquisitely true; so trusting, yet,
So fearful; all made up of the fond hope
That trembling sits and smiles. What agony
To look upon that smile, and watch that hope,
And know how false, how hollow! I've deserved
Even that bitterest drop.
MOR. This is, indeed,
A sickness of the soul. Henry, we two
Have been, from boy to youth, from youth to man,
Friends; not of such as borrow friendship's name
To gild the flimsy band that knits gay striplings
In light companionship, or the politic league
Of subtle selfish man; but friends of the old
Heroic cast, such as forbear, and bear,
And serve, and love, and die, and trust their lives
To the proved faith of friendship.
TAL. Such we were,
And if a spirit so fallen—
MOR. Such we are!
And being such, I do conjure thee, Henry,
By that old friendship, by the gushing tears
Which filled our eyes at meeting, by the love
Which even now is working in our breasts,
Confide in me. Disclose the fatal secret
Which weighs upon your soul.

TAL. What! cast the shade
Of guilt on thy white honour? Tell to thee,
To thee that deadly——Never! never! never!
Here let it die!—Here! here! Even though it swell
My heart to bursting.

MOR. Henry, you are ill;
And your sick fancy in the wayward mood,
Turns error into crime. A purer mind,
A nobler heart, and set aside the rare
And momentary flash of sudden wrath,
A kinder temper—

TAL. Momentary! Ay,
So is the thunderbolt.

MOR. I do implore,
Even as I would sue for present life,
Brood not upo n this tale. Or tell it me,
Or chase it from thy memory.

TAL. Listen, then,
Since thou wilt share the load,—since thou wilt wrest
The murderer's story, listen!

MOR. Murderer!

TAL. Why, I have said it. Didst thou think that I
Was dying for some trivial larceny—
Some poor man's common crime? Sir, thou shalt find
I am a braver villain!

MOR. Talk not thus.
I pray you, talk not thus. Be calm! Be calm!

TAL. And he would still a breaking heart with words,
As Canute talk'd—He weeps! Forgive me, friend!
Truest and best, and dearest, pardon me!
For I am near bestraught with misery,
And know not what I say. Forgive me, Mordaunt,
And listen. Didst thou e'er—First reach that water,
And sit down here by me; for I must speak
Names that will shake my very soul, and then
The voice may falter. Interrupt me not;
For I have now a passing hour of strength,
A gleam of parting light, and I would fain

Pour into thy kind bosom my remorse,
My agony. So! Did you ever see
Lionel Grey?

MOR. Never.

TAL. Nor his dear mother,
The widow Grey?

MOR. Your nurse? That kindest woman!
Often.

TAL. She was, indeed, the kindest woman,
The simplest, gentlest, sweetest-spirited woman
That ever trod the earth;—my foster mother,
Who look'd around on all her little world
With the indulgent softness that she felt
For the infant at her breast; for me, whom most
She loved; for me, who most loved her; my refuge
In every childish grief, the joyful sharer
Of every childish joy! Oh, how I loved
That dear and smiling face, made beautiful
By the warm heart, and the soft pleasant voice
That never spake but true and gentle words!
That never—She is dead! And I—nay, fear not—
This pang will pass away. She had a son,
An only child;—the milk which nourished me,
Was stolen from him.—Poor Lionel! so soon
Did I—He was a lovely youth; most richly
Deck'd with all lighter graces, music, painting,
And poesy; and, as he grew to manhood,
His talent grew finer and stronger. Proud
Was his dear mother of his pretty songs,
When Ellen Talbot sang them.

MOR. I have heard her.
A queen might have been proud had such lips sung
The lays of her king-son.

TAL. Poor Lionel
Was with us long and often. In our house
And in our hearts he held a brother's place,
Till he at length forgot the unequal rank
Which we would not remember. Rash and vain,

And most presumptuous in his love!—Alas!
And dare I blame him?—I!—My sister saw
His passion for Louisa, and she strove
To check his hopes; but I saw nought, till all
Fatally—fatally—It was a day
Of sultry August, Lionel and I
At sunset sought the river, and embarked
Alone upon the waters. Oh, how calm,
How beautiful they were! How made for peace!
The golden clouds shone into them, and there
The soft and bright blue sky, fringed in by trees.
My soul was lapp'd in the calm loveliness,
The balmy silence. When, all suddenly,
Lionel, heated as I think by wine,
Demanded my Louisa's hand. Louisa!
Mine own affianced bride! I told him this
Calmly and soothingly; and he replied
That I might force her hand, but that her heart
Was his. Then the strong frenzy mastered me,
And with the oar I dashed him overboard,
Stunn'd, stupified! I too stood motionless,
Stunn'd, stupified, till I saw the drowning wretch
Rise on the waters. Then the sense returned;
The fear, the hope, the breathless agony,
The desperate struggle. How I toiled to save
Whom I had murdered! How I rowed and swam,
And dived, and all but died! We were drawn out
Together; he a breathless corse, and I
A wretch that could not die, doomed to live on,
With the new, aching, gnawing consciousness
Of deadly crime here at my heart—here! here!
Now, am I not a murderer?

MOR. Surely, no.
It was a frenzied impulse; an unhappy,
But unintended homicide. Thy will
Was innocent of the deed.

TAL. Oft have I tried
To think so; but I recollect too well

I had a murderer's feelings when I raised—
Seek not to palliate.

MOR. Yet be comforted.
Whate'er the crime, surely the penalty
May expiate; thy bitter sufferings,
Thy deep and true repentance!

TAL. Oh, if tears
Could wash out blood, no day hath passed but I
Have thus embalmed his memory! Grievously
Have I been punished; here, in my heart's core;
In undeserved respect; in praise; in love;
In poor Louisa; in my noble sister;
In all the tears I cause. All lovely things
Combine to punish me; the golden evening,
The sunny waters, and the calm blue sky,
They are my scourges! Oh, the agony
That I have felt at kindness! Most at hers,
The mother's. After that most wretched night,
My mind and body sank, alike subdued,
For many weeks. A merciful pause it was
Of misery! I woke again to suffer,
And the first person by my couch was she
In her deep mourning habit; her pale face
Covered with tears, yet trying for a smile;
And that voice, once so pleasant, low and hoarse,
Yet striving still, in sweet and gentle words,
To speak of love, and care, and gratitude
To me—Great God! to me!—for all I dared
To save her son! She thanked me, and she blessed me!
She blessed me! Never curse struck to the soul
Like that kind woman's blessing!

MOR. And she died?

TAL. She died. For many weeks I watched her bed,
And then I closed her eyes, and followed her,
And saw her laid by him! That was my death-stroke.
Then, when the earth fell cold on both my victims,
My doom was sealed.

MOR. Oh, say not so, dear Henry!

Live for us all. For poor Louisa, live!
For thy own Eleanor!—for me!
TAL. My heart
Is lighter. When I die, if Eleanor
Should grieve, as well I think she will, oh! tell her
My story; she will then be comforted
That I am in my grave. Poor, poor Louisa!
When the oak falls, the ivy dies with it;
And she—But I am better, lighter, easier
In body and in soul. There is no balm
So healing as a good man's pity.
MOR. Say
His love, his deep respect. Thou hast well practised
The painfullest and noblest of all virtues—
Repentance. Comfort thee! Look forward, onward:
Think in thy being how much happiness
Is lapt.
TAL. Oh, my true friend! Hark! She comes here!
I know her tread afar,—her nymph-like tread,
So light and quick. The graceful greyhound scarce
Can match her graceful speed.

Enter ELEANOR *and* LOUISA.

LOU. Sir Francis, welcome!
This is indeed a happiness.—How well
He looks! How much revived!
EL. His face is flushed;
But that
LOU. Look at his eye! and see! see! see!
He smiles again! Oh, blessings on his head
Whose coming caused that smile!
MOR. Why, such a blessing
Might span the broad Atlantic.
LOU. I would chide him
That he did not come sooner, the dear friend,
Bringer of health and comfort.
TAL. My Louisa,

I do begin to hope.

LOU. Oh, blessed sound!

TAL. When shall we forth into the woods, fair Ellen?

EL. First, dearest brother, rest awhile. The sun
Is overcast. Wait till the clouds disperse.
Rest thee. Ay so. Now, shall I read to thee?

TAL. No. All this day, an old and favourite strain
Hath echoed in my ear. Wilt thou not sing it
For me, Louisa?

LOU. Yes! oh, yes!

EL. But listening
To her sweet voice is not repose.

MOR. What then?

EL. Pleasure, exciting, searching, rapturous pleasure!
Yet sing to him, Louisa! See how pale,
How shivering.—Henry, thou art ill again?

TAL. No; 'twill pass off. Dearest and kindest sister,
Believe, 'twill pass away. Now sing.

LOU. What song?

TAL. That which is ringing in mine ears. The strain,
Which welcomed home my truant ancestor,
And heralded his bridals. Fortunate
The air, and blest the bridals. Ever since
That air hath ushered in the nuptial morn
Of all our house. Louisa, I would fain
Hear that song once again.

LOU. Not that! not that!

EL. Yes. 'Tis a pleasant air with its gay chime.
And suits thee well; thy springy form, thy voice,
Young, lively, clear, thy blushing smile. Sing! sing!
Here's thy guitar!—Still paler!—Sing, Louisa!

LOUISA *sings.*

And art thou come back again
From over the salt sea?
Hark! the bells ring a merry peal
As if to welcome thee!

And art thou, love, come back again
With a true heart and free?
Hark! how the merry bells ring on
As triumphing with me?

For first 'twas said that thou hadst fallen
In the fierce battle strife;
And then that sudden pestilence
Had swept away thy life;
One told that thou hadst wedded there
A lady of the land;
And one that thou wast speeding home
To win young Dora's hand.

But thou art come back safe again
From over the salt sea;
Hark! the bells ring their merriest peal
To hail and welcome thee.
And thou art come back, mine own love,
With a true heart and free;
And the merry merry bells ring on
Their peal of joy for me.

EL. Oh, help! he faints! Help! help! His breath is gone.

MOR. Alas! alas! he ne'er—I cannot find
A pulse—alas! he's dead!

LOU. Dead! dare not say it!
'Tis but a swoon. He's better. He'll be well.
Did he not say so,—he whose voice was truth?
And dost thou dare—Oh, rouse thee, my own Henry,
And I will sing to thee—

EL. Oh, hush! hush! hush!

LOU. Will sing to thee the song thou lov'st so well.

(Sings.)

And the merry merry bells ring on
Their peal of joy for me.

EL. Cease! cease! Oh, this is horrible! Weep! Weep!
Weep for thy Henry! He is gone! the kindest,
The tenderest, the best!—Her brain is wandering.

LOU. (*Sings.*) For thou art come back safe again—
I cannot sing. I have no breath. I tremble
At my own voice. And he, he listens not.
Henry! He hears me not. He's dead! he's dead!
Eleanor, he is dead.

EL. She, too, will die;
That other dearest thing! And I alone,
And desolate—

MOR. No, Ellen, not alone!

EL. Oh, tell me, thou his friend, what load of grief—

MOR. He died a penitent.

EL. For that, thank Heaven!
All else may be endured. My kindest brother!
My tenderest! my best! Farewell! Farewell!

THE SIEGE.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

CHARACTERS.

Bianca, Duchess of Mantua.
Claudia, her young Maid of Honour.
Count D'Ossima, her General.
Countess D'Ossima, his Wife.
Orlando, an Officer.
Melzi, a Chamberlain.
Antonio, a Dumb Page.

SCENE—The Palace at Mantua.

THE SIEGE.

DUCHESS, CLAUDIA, MELZI.

DUCH. Now my good chamberlain, I pr'ythee send
And tell the governor at six this evening
We will attend the council. Hark ye, Sir!
Keep the door close. Let no one enter here,
Soldier or statesman. 'Tis a day of truce;
For once the weary echoes sleep in peace
Unroused by the loud cannonry; I too
Would fain for once be quiet. [*Exit* MELZI.
Claudia mine,
Sit down and talk to me, and comfort me,
My little faithful girl.
CLAU. Ah! dearest lady;
I would I were a man to fight for thee,
And kill this terrible cousin!
DUCH. Out upon thee!
Thou kill a man, my pretty lady-bird,
My blossom of fourteen! I did not think
That thou hadst been so fond of fighting, Claudia;
I've seen thee quake and shiver and turn pale—
Ay, as myself—at many a bloody sight
And warlike sound this siege has forced upon us.
CLAU. But if I were a man—and even now,

Poor coward as she is, for her dear mistress
Would Claudia die.

DUCH. That were no kindly service
To thy poor loving mistress! Rather wish
That thou and I, remote from all this coil,
Two cottage maidens, on some pleasant hill
Dwelt peacefully. Claudia, shouldst thou not like
To sit at evening, working in the porch,
Watching the sunset, whilst the vine-wreathed elms
Were richly gilded by his upward beams;
And thou wouldst tell a hundred merry tales,
And I should sing sweet snatches of old songs,
The songs thou lov'st so well.

CLAU. Oh! we should be
As blithe as two young birds!

DUCH. Such joy may come;
But there will be much tumult and unrest
Before that blessed hour. Ah! woe is me
That ever I was born a princess, Claudia!

CLAU. That ever the ambitious Prince Lorenzo
Was born to claim your rightful crown!

DUCH. To win!
Nay, start not, Claudia; I have not a hope
Remaining. Here we are, shut up in Mantua,—
Mantua, which nought can save but speedy succour:—
And where to look for aid!—All my allies
Weak, wavering, treacherous, to my fortunate cousin
Inclining, as the sunflower to the sun;
My valiant general wounded and a prisoner:
And she, his wife, whose prompt and active spirit
Was well worth my whole council-board, she too
A voluntary captive.

CLAU. The dear countess!
How much we miss her quick and cheerful look,
Her frank and pleasant speech! Yet she was right
To tend her husband's couch;—was she not right?

DUCH. Oh! yes.

CLAU. And she will soon be back. I dreamt

Last night that she was here, and the lord cardinal
Your wisest uncle, and another lord,
—But not a cardinal,—so noble-looking,
So lovely, yet so grand; and he and you—
I must not tell your highness what I dreamt,
But I will wager that the cardinal
Will speedily be here.

DUCH. Now, Heaven forfend!
That wise lord cardinal, as thou call'st him, girl,
He is my grief of griefs. I have a letter
Of that wise lord's inditing—

Enter MELZI.

How now, Sir!
Did we not say we would be private?

MEL. Madam,
The Countess D'Ossima. [*Exit.*

Enter COUNTESS D'OSSIMA *and* ORLANDO.

DUCH. Laura! my own Laura!
Thou comest at a wish. Claudia and I
Were talking of thee.

CLAU. Nay, I dreamt of her—

COUN. And be it for good or evil, Claudia's dreams
Do still come true—say'st thou not so, my sweet one?
How the dear child clings to me! Let me pay
My love and duty here;—my royal mistress!
My dearest friend!

DUCH. I ask not for my general;
To see thee here and smiling, is to know
That he is better.

COUN. Better; but still weak.

DUCH. And may we hope to see him? Will they hear
Of ransom? Claudia here would pawn her jewels,
And so would I, even to my very crown,
Could we so purchase that bold faithful friend,
Whose presence was protection.

CLAU. That we would.

Shall I go fetch them?
COUN. My sweet simpleton,
There is no need. I have not words to thank you,—
But the fair duchess will regain her servant,
Claudia her merry friend, without the loss
Of one the smallest of those seedling pearls
That fringe the royal mantle. He will soon
Be here. This young and valiant gentleman,
To whom he hath been an honour'd prisoner,
I a most cherish'd and most grateful guest,
Will tell you on what terms.
DUCH. He brings with him
A welcome in your praises. Gentle Sir,
What are these terms? Your prince can scarcely ask
That which we should refuse. What must we give
For our great captain's freedom?
OR. Gracious Madam,
I am commanded to deliver him
Without exchange or ransom. He is now
With a small escort at the city gate!
He would remain there—a most needless form—
Till I returned;—a vain and needless form,
But one, which well becomes the stainless honour
Of that bright ornament of chivalry
Count D'Ossima.
DUCH. Without ransom or exchange?
OR. Without exchange or ransom—free as air.
The Prince Lorenzo would not for those worlds
Which roll unnumbered in the midnight heaven,
By staking it 'gainst one of smaller note,
Degrade your general's old and noble name.
But he being free, I have a grace to crave
Of your free bounty. You have here, fair duchess,
A prisoner, whom my master fain would ransom
With aught that he——
DUCH. Talk not of ramson, Sir!
Take him. I am too happy to repay
Some slender part of this amazing debt

Of courtesy and kindness to your prince.
I knew not we had any prisoner
Of note enough for ransom. Yesternight
Some soldiers were brought in; and a young boy
Dumb as they thought—

OR. Deaf from his birth and mute.
That is the boy,—Lorenzo's favourite page.

DUCH. His page! That poor mute boy Lorenzo's page!
The bold and fortunate soldier, who, men say,
Is rough as winds in March! What can he do
With such a helpless innocent?

OR. As the winds
Of March do with the violet, lap it round,
And nurse it, with a rude protecting love,
Into a stronger beauty, and a more
Exceeding sweetness. Prince Lorenzo found,
Five years ago, this young and tender boy
Hanging, all drowned in dumb and innocent tears,
Over his dying mother, who implored
Protection for her child, with such a fond
And passionate earnestness, as might have moved
A heart of stone. He promised, and as yet
Hath kept his promise. This is the first time
Antonio and his master have been parted.
Right glad will either be to see the other;
Right grateful to the fair and royal dame
To whom they owe such joy.

DUCH. My Claudia, send
To summon the mute page.—What is he like?

[*Exit* CLAUDIA.

OR. A lovely boy—fair, slender, delicate,
Almost as that young maid; with curling hair
Of such a brown as is the unsunned side
Of the ripe hazel nut; a ready smile
Instinct with meaning; a quick varying blush,
Which is his prettier speeeh; a large blue eye
Tenderly watching those whom best he loves,
And giving back their looks, as the clear lake

Reflects its shores.

DUCH. To thee, too, he was dear?

OR. Oh! very dear. So innocent, so helpless,
So made for love and pity! He was a sort
Of living gentleness, and gentle thoughts
Came with his presence. In the rough rude camp
That peaceful spirit seemed a type of peace,
As a small bit, no bigger than my hand,
Of the exquisite blue sky, looks out and smiles
From the dark stormy heaven. For this we loved him.

DUCH. For this you loved him,—that I well believe;
But surely, Sir, the bold ambitious soldier,
His warlike master, loved him not for this?

OR. I cannot read men's hearts; but surely, Madam,
I think he did.

DUCH. Can he love anything?

OR. He must be made of stubborn stuff indeed,
That did not give some kindness to that kind
Affectionate boy. The most unloving heart
That ever froze within a coat of mail
Must have loved him. His pretty flattery,
Unlike all other flatteries; his apt
And constant service; and the stronger tie
Of his entire dependence; his so fond
And firm reliance—speak, fair Countess D'Ossima.
Did not Lorenzo love him?

COUN. I am sure
He loved him, Sir, as fondly as yourself.

Enter CLAUDIA.

DUCH. Well, Claudia?

CLAU. They have sent to seek him, Madam.

DUCH. How came he taken?

OR. He's a painter born,
And, as we guess, caught by some lovelier scene,
Some bright effect of sunshine or of shade,
Ventured too near the walls. He is absorbed
In his delightful art; beauty to him

Is as a real goddess. Poor Antonio !
How richly will his short captivity
Be paid when he shall see—Did you not say
You had no picture? that she had refused?
Dear countess, I will beg for you the next
Hebe or Flora that Antonio paints,
And that will be her portrait.

COUN. Fail me not.

OR. Have I your highness' leave to seek the gates,
And bring Count D'Ossima? I fear for him
This long exposure to the noon-day sun.
He will be better here. May I not say
'Tis your command? He must obey me then.

DUCH. It is my wish. By that time young Antonio
Will be prepared to meet you. I would offer
An hostage for your safety, but I see
You doubt us not;—the generous and the brave,
They know not what doubt means.—One of my chamber,
Attend this gentleman!—You will return
In half an hour.

OR. In a less space, fair duchess,
I trust to bring my captive to your feet.

COUN. Now is your wager won?

OR. Lost. I have lost
Two hearts. [*Exit.*

CLAU. Oh what a gallant gentleman !
How noble and how stately, yet how gentle !
What a fine frankness, mix'd with deep respect
And winning courtesy ! What piercing eyes—
Such sudden laughter in them when he glanced
Up at the countess ! What a gracious smile !
And then his voice—so sweet, so very kind,
As if he loved all that he talked about;—
Oh, he's the very creature of my dream !

COUN. Thy dream again ! What was it, mistress mine?
Was he to wed thee?

CLAU. Me ! Oh no ! Wed me !
No, no, not me. Cannot you guess? Wed me !

DUCH. Peace, dearest prattler! Tell me, my own Laura,
The story of thy absence: tell me all,
All that befell thee in that hostile camp.
But first—What is he called?
COUN. Who call'd?
DUCH. The youth
That left us even now. Is he of rank?
COUN. High born, not wealthy; of the younger branch
Of an illustrious house; a gallant soldier,
High in your cousin's councils and the love
Of his brave army, is our kind Orlando.
CLAU. Orlando! What a pretty knightly name!
DUCH. Claudia, be still. Now, countess, for thy tale.
COUN. 'Tis summed up in two words. In yonder camp,
Our hatred and our fear, nothing I found
But noble kindness; I have brought away
Nothing but gratitude. He is so great,
So good!
DUCH. Orlando?
COUN. Ay, and Prince Lorenzo.
You know what fear possess'd me when I sought
My husband, dead or living; in that fear,
Growing upon me even to senselessness,
I reach'd the camp and fainted. I revived
To hear a well-known voice call upon Laura,
His own dear Laura, and I found myself
Supported on a kind and manly breast,
Beside my husband's couch.
DUCH. Orlando's?
COUN. Yes.
We were his prisoners,—no—his honour'd guests,
For so he loved to call us; and as guests
Beloved and honour'd we have dwelt with him
Even till this hour. Never was sympathy
So touching and so true. He shared my watch
Throughout the weary night, as soothingly
As mothers tend a sickly babe! he cheer'd
The painful day with reading and with converse,

And hopeful happy smiles. He and Antonio,
The sweet mute page, they were to me, Bianca,
Another dear Bianca and her Claudia.
Can I say more? Is not this gentleness
Rare in a soldier? Then the peaceful tastes
That dwelt so strangely in that warlike tent.
Cittern and flute, and books in many tongues,
And drawings above all, free, masterly,
Even as his dear Antonio's. Not a map
Or soldier's plan but on some vacant edge
Betray'd the artist's hand.

CLAU. Oh what a man!

COUN. Has my sweet duchess then no news for me?
Has she not letters from the cardinal?

DUCH. Such as I blush to show thee. He would have me—
Me born a princess!—He would have me, Laura,
Me trained by thee in whitest modesty
And delicate reserve!—He would have me
Cast off all maiden pride, all womanly shame,
And seek, invite, and win, if win I may,
This young Lorenzo. I would sooner die.

COUN. I would not have thee seek him, my Bianca,
And yet—

DUCH. Yet what?

COUN. I wish thou wast his wife.

DUCH. His wife! That fierce rough man my enemy—
His wife!

COUN. Thou art mistaken in him, dearest!—
Mantua must fall.

DUCH. Why I can live unduchess'd.
Claudia and I were planning out to-day
A happy cottage life—

COUN. Pooh! pooh!

DUCH. Or thou
May'st give us shelter.

COUN. Never doubt of that.

DUCH. Yet it might injure thee with the new duke

(How strange that title sounds!) to harbour me.
No! a pale nun within some lowly cell,
I may defy life's changes. Thou wilt go
With me, my Claudia? Oh, I still must have
Something to love!—the strong necessity
Of woman's heart. Thou wilt go with me, dearest?

CLAU. Ay, to the end of the world. But my own duchess
Will never be a nun. A happier fate
Is hers. She will find some one better worth
Her love than poor, poor Claudia—will she not?
A different love!

DUCH. My little faithful girl,
We'll to a nunnery. Countess—I know not
Why I should ask the question—What was that
Signor Orlando gave thee as ye parted?

COUN. A trifling toy.

DUCH. Did I not hear him say—
I scarce could catch the words—What was the toy?

COUN. A heart-shaped brooch of ruby, set with pearls.
See, here.

CLAU. The pretty trinket! And he gave thee
This for a keep-sake?

COUN No. I won it of him
In a fair wager.

CLAU. About what? Do tell!

COUN. We two were talking gravely yesternight
Of beauty of complexion. He preferred
Corregio's bright-haired angels, fair as light,
Soft as a summer cloud. I love, you know,
The lovely brown; and much I talked of eyes
Shining through long, dark lashes; clustering curls
As dark as they, adorning and contrasting
The ivory forehead; much of dimpled cheeks,
Coloured like damask roses, and of lips
Like parted coral; till at last I wagered
That ere another sunset he should own
Himself my convert. He has lost his stake,
As ye perceive.

DUCH. And Claudia's glossy hair
Is pale as undyed silk!
CLAU. He's here again.

Enter COUNT D'OSSIMA, *supported by* ORLANDO *and* MELZI.

DUCH. My gallant general, my faithful friend,
Welcome!—How weak you are! Lie on this couch.
Yes, Claudia, that is right—shake up the cushions.
So! so! Lie down.
COUNT D'Os. My sweet and gentle mistress,
This graciousness—
DUCH. Hush! hush! Go to him, Laura.
My Claudia, thy caresses overpower him.
How pale he is! how faint!—And I the cause
Of all this misery!—Melzi, come to me.
CLAU. Alas! how much he suffers! Think you, Sir,
He will be well again?
OR. Oh, doubt it not!
This painful langour springs from loss of blood;
From this his first exertion; most of all
From the deep joy to be again at home,
To meet his royal mistress, and to feel
Her touching tenderness.
MEL. The crown and keys?
DUCH Yes—yes. [*Exit* MELZI.
Signor Orlando, we expect
The mute page instantly.
OR. I can but bless
His absence, gracious lady.
DUCH. Once again
Accept my thanks. Countess, I see we still
Must want our general; he is too weak
To venture forth to battle.
COUNT D'Os. Strong enough
To fight for you, die for you. But, alas!
The sacrifice were vain. There is no hope,
The strength of yonder army, and the skill
Of its brave leader, and the gathering numbers

Of bold allies that flock on every side;—
And we so few!—

OR. I ought not to hear this.

DUCH. Yes, most of all you ought. Signor Orlando,
You are a generous enemy,—a friend;—
I cannot call him less to whom I owe
Count D'Ossima—and as friend or enemy
Hear me! I will no longer sacrifice
My faithful subjects in this wasting war.
My cousin, howsoe'er we have been trained
To hate each other, is a gallant prince,
Wise, valiant, fortunate, and fitter far
To reign in Mantua than I, a woman,
A timorous, friendless, most defenceless woman!

Re-enter MELZI, *with the Crown, which he gives to the* DUCHESS, *and goes out.*

Bear thou to Prince Lorenzo, to the Duke
Of Mantua, this crown, the honoured crown
Of our brave ancestors; no braver man
E'er wreathed his hard-won laurels with the gems
That star its golden circlet. With it bear
The city keys. Conjure him to forgive
My bold defenders; their fidelity
To me is the best pledge of loyalty
To their new master. Oh, be they forgiven!
For me, I only ask to pass unharmed
As far as Naples.—Grieve not, my good lord;
Claudia and I shall be as happy there
As two young linnets freshly let abroad
From a fine gilded cage.—Nay, take the crown.

OR. Duchess!

DUCH. I am no duchess. To that title
I'll never answer more. Signor Orlando,
I am Bianca di Gonzaga now;
I pr'ythee call me so;—and take this crown.

OR. Not yet; not yet. Fair Countess, hast thou said
Lorenzo's message?

COUN. No. My own Bianca,
Thou hast done rightly, wisely; but this prince,
This duke—no matter how, or when, or where—
Hath seen and loves thee, and will little prize
Thy crown without thyself.
DUCH. It cannot be.
COUN. 'Tis so.
DUCH. And if it were, could I love him
So long my foe, and now and evermore
A rude, blunt soldier? I am no Hippolita,
To be conquered into love.
COUN. Thou know'st him not.
Truly thou saidst that ye have both been trained
In hatred. He thought thee, my trembling fawn,
A youthful Amazon;—he's wiser now;—
And thou, when thou shalt know him, wilt confess
Thou too hast been mistaken. D'Ossima, say,
Is not the prince most amiable?
COUNT D'Os. A hero.—
DUCH. Why, there it is! I hate the very sound—
A hero! A mere fighter! whose one virtue
Is o'ertopped by the lion. Pardon me,
My valiant friends; I do beseech you, pardon!
You may, for heroes though you be, you still
Are something more. It chafes my very soul
To hear all manly qualities comprised
In that brute instinct, courage. If I wed,
It shall be one who joins to a bold spirit
A kind and tender heart; one who can love
All gentle things, books, music, nature, art;
One who—But I shall never wed! I pray you,
Good signor, take the crown. Where is this page?
COUN. All that thou hast described is Prince Lorenzo;—
Will not his friend plead for him?
OR. On my knees
I do intreat his fair obdurate cousin
To hear him plead himself. Admit him once!
DUCH. Thou too!—My Claudia, we will to a nunnery;—

Thou wilt go with me?

CLAU. To the death. How strange
And sad this is! my dream was different.

Enter MELZI *and* ANTONIO.

MEL. Madam, the page.

DUCH. We'll to a nunnery.

CLAU. Look there, look there, dear duchess! see, he kneels
Low at his master's feet!

DUCH. We'll to a nunnery.

CLAU. Nay, but look at him;—he's so beautiful;—
He's risen now. And look! look! look! dear duchess!
The poor rejected crown,—look, he has placed it
Upon Orlando's head. How it becomes him!—
How like a prince he looks!—Like! 'Tis the prince!
The prince himself!

COUN. Dear ardent girl, it is.

OR. Canst though forgive me, cousin? loveliest cousin,
And most beloved!—Say, canst thou pardon me?
There is thy crown, Bianca! Thou art still
The Duchess! None but thou shall reign in Mantua.
The sceptre is a bauble; my ambition
Soars higher; I would call the hand that sways it
My own, my very own. Speak, most beloved!
My lovely cousin speak!

DUCH. Is all this real?
Art thou Lorenzo? And dost thou indeed—?
Do not deceive me.

OR. Never, sweet, again,
So help me love!

CLAU. Now is not Claudia's dream
The very truth? You'll see the cardinal
Will come to bless their union. Look! the page,
The lovely page, how earnestly he gazes
On our more lovely duchess!—Look! he joins
Their hands;—and now he kneels to kiss those hands
United; and she blushes, and he smiles.
Heaven bless them both! So ends our weary siege.

THE CAPTIVE.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

CHARACTERS.

Alberto, an usurper of the Throne of Sicily.
Theodore, a boy of fifteen, the rightful King.
Julia, a girl of the same age, Alberto's daughter.

SCENE—A gloomy Chamber in a Gothic Castle in Messina.

THE CAPTIVE.

Enter ALBERTO *and* THEODORE.

ALB. Enter and fear not, trembler. Thou shalt live.

THEO. Ay, that I feared.

ALB. Dost hear me, boy? I say
That thou shalt live.

THEO. I feared so.

ALB. Wouldst thou die?

THEO. If it pleased Heaven, most willingly. I know
That I'm a prisoner. I shall never walk
In the sun's blessed light, or feel the touch
Of the free air, or hear the summer brook
All idly babbling to the moon, or taste
The morning breath of flowers. The thousand charms
Which make in our Sicilian Isle mere life
A thrilling pleasantness, which send a glow
Through the poorest serf that tills the happy soil—
I am shut out from all. This is my tomb.
Uncle, be merciful! I do not ask
My throne again—Reign! reign! I have forgot
That I was once a King. But let me bide
In some small woodland cottage, where green leaves
May wave around me, and cool breezes kiss
My brow. Keep me not in a dungeon, uncle,
Or this dark gloomy chamber. Let me dwell

In some wild forest. I'll not breathe a word
That might be dangerous. No! not to the birds
My songsters, or the fawns, my playmates, uncle;
Thou ne'er shalt hear of me again.

ALB. Boy! boy!
Cling not about me thus!

THEO. Thou wilt have mercy!
Thy heart is softening.

ALB. 'Tis too late.—To reign,
And he at liberty! I am a child
Myself, that won by this child's gentleness
I seemed to waver. Boy, thy fate is fixed;
Thyself hast said it. Thou'rt a prisoner,
And for thy whole life long; a caged bird.
Be wiser than the feathered fool that beats
His wings against the wire. Thou shalt have all
Thy heart can ask, save freedom, and that never!
I tell thee so in love, and not in hate;
For I would root out hope and fear, and plant
Patience in thy young soul.

THEO. And Julia?

ALB. Her
Thou ne'er must see again.

THEO. Never! Is she
A prisoner too? Not once to say farewell!
Alas! alas! that bauble of a crown,
How it makes kind hearts cruel! Thou wast once
In all my little griefs my comforter,
And now—Not see my cousin Julia once!
Mine own dear cousin Julia! Let me see her
Once, only once!—only to catch one sound
Of that sweet voice, and on that whitest hand
Drop one fond tear, and steal but one of the bright
And wavy ringlets from her brow, and pray
That Heaven may bless her.—Let me see her once,
But once, and then I'll walk back to my prison,
And dream away this winter of a life,
As a silly dormouse in his Christmas nest

Sleeps through his six months' night. Turn not away!
Wast thou born pitiless?
ALB. No. I have quelled
That dangerous softness. Pretty boy, farewell!
Rest thee content. No harm shall happen thee. [*Exit.*
THEO. Content! Oh, mockery of grief! Content!
Was't not enough to take away my crown,
To mew me up here in a living tomb,
Cut off from every human tie, from thee,
Julia, my cousin Julia; but my jailor
Must bid me be content! Would I were dead!
Forgive me, Heaven, for my impatience!
I will take better thoughts. 'Tis but to fancy
This room a quiet hermitage, and pray
As hermits use through the long silent hours.
I shall be innocent. Sure, he's a friend
That shuts me out from sin. Did he not call me
A caged bird? I've seen one prune himself,
And hop from perch to perch, and chirp and sing
Merrily! Happy fool, it had forgot
Blithe liberty! But man, though he should drag
A captive's heavy chain, even till he starts
To hear his own sad voice, cannot forget.
He wants that blessed gift. Is not to-day
The gay procession of the vintagers
Ere they begin their annual toil? A relic
Of the old heathen rites! Last year I saw it;
'Twas a fair pageant; one that might have graced
The famous Grecian day, with its long line
Of maidens tripping under the light load
Of grape-piled baskets on their heads, and youths
With pipes timing their steps, and younger girls
And rosy boys dragging the struggling goats,
By flow'ry garlands. Such procession well
Had honour'd the god Bacchus. *She* was there,
And in her innocent gaiety led on
The virgin troop, distinguish'd but by grace
Unrivall'd, and a wreath of brightest flowers

That crowned her brimming basket. How she sway'd
Her pretty head to the soft double flute,
Whilst ever as she bent, the coronal
Seem'd like to fall, till with a smiling toss
She flung it up again, and danced along
With such an airiness, as if her step
Belong'd not to dull earth. Oh, loveliest maid!
Must I ne'er see thee more?

Enter JULIA *through a secret door.*

Who's there? How cam'st thou?
Art thou indeed my cousin Julia? Is't
Thyself, thy living self? I cannot trust
My sight.

JUL. (*Giving him her hand.*) Dost doubt me now?

THEO. No. But when first
I saw thee standing with thy pitying eyes
Fix'd on my face, thou seem'dst an angel! Say
How cam'st thou here?

JUL. He,—I'll not call him father—
He, who imprisoned thee, forgot, or knew not,
The secret passage, that in one long chain
Links all the western chambers. Constance mark'd
The guarded door. Follow me.

THEO. Where?

JUL. To freedom!
To happiness!

THEO. Now, blessings on thy head!
Did I not say thou wast an Angel? Freedom!
Ay, that *is* happiness. A whole life's service
Were over poor to pay this debt.

JUL. We stay
Too long. Come with me.

THEO. But to leave thee, sweetest,—
Perchance in danger,—for should he suspect—
No! I'll stay here,—my very inmost soul
Thanks thee, my kindest cousin. But I'll stay,
I'll not awaken his unnatural hate

'Gainst thee. He loves thee—but he loved me once—
And mated with ambition, even his child,
His only child, were nothing. I'll stay here,
In my lone prison. Think of me as one
Freed from a cumbrous load of state and care,
Held to the world but by the undying love
That knits my soul to thine. Go and be happy,
And in thy bliss shall I be blest. We still
Shall breathe the same air, Julia. I may catch
From out my window a short stolen glance
Of thy fair form; may hear, when distant doors
Shall chance to open, a brief passing sound
Of thy dear voice; and sometimes thou may'st glide
Even to this gloomy chamber, bringing light,
And life, and joy. A moment since I pined
For liberty. Now I would rather dwell
In a deep dungeon, where such visions come,
Than fill a throne without them. Thou wilt deign
To visit the poor captive, wilt thou not?
Oh, dearest, to be banished from thy sight
Were worse than death. Thou'lt come again? But now
Away! I fear the King.

JUL. He whom thou call'st such
Is busy at the council. Theodore,
In mercy follow me! I too shall share
Thy flight.

THEO. Thou! Thou! Oh, sweetest, dearest, best!
I stand as in a dream.—Thou go with me!
Whither? and wherefore?

JUL. Question not; but come.
There is a Spanish ship in harbour here,
With her sails spread for instant voyage. My Constance
And her bold captain are betroth'd. He waits
With sure disguises, and hath promised us
A safe and pleasant home in fair Castile.
A mountain hut close by a gushing spring,
Where the huge cork trees fling their heavy shade
O'er herds and flocks; and we shall lead a calm

And happy pastoral life; a shepherd thou
With pipe and crook, and I a cottage maid,
A careful housewife. Thou shalt see how soon
I'll learn the rustic craft, to milk my ewes
Or press the snowy curd, or haply mould
The richer cheese. Shalt thou not like, dear cousin,
To be a shepherd on the downy hills,
Tending thy flock all day, and I to bring
Water and country cates, an homely meal;
And sing and prattle at thy side, most like
A mountain bee? I'll wager, Theodore,
I prove the thriftier peasant.

THEO. But to bend thee
To poor and servile toil—

JUL. Poor! I have here
Jewels to buy an earldom. See! a sword too,
To guard us on the way. Take it. Dear cousin,
We waste the hour.

THEO. My Julia, tempt me not
To selfish and ungrateful sin. The saints
May witness for me, that I ever loathed
Pomp and its slavery. The lot thou offerest
Hath been the vision of my dreamy hours
All my life long. But thou so proudly reared
So delicately served,—thou born a princess,
And nurtured like a queen, how couldst thou bear
The peasant's lowly lot?—Had I the crown
That once prest my young brow, had I a throne
To share with thee, my fairest, but an exile—
A houseless fugitive,—Alas! Alas!
Tempt me no more, sweet maiden! Stay and reign
In thine own Sicily.

JUL. I'll stay and die,
Since thou dost spurn me from thee. Fare thee well!
Yet, in thy calmer thoughts,—if thou shouldst think
Again on thy poor friend—Oh, deem her not
Bold or unmaidenly!—We lived and loved
As brother and as sister.—

THEO. Far, far dearer!
JUL. And as a sister in our mutual grief
I came to thee. Oh, let us fly, dear cousin!
In pity, let us fly! My cruel father—
THEO. Cruel to thee?—to thee!
JUL. Alas, to bind
The subtle traitor Lanza to his cause,
He offers up his child. Another day,
And I must wed.
THEO. Give me the sword. Wed! Cousin,
I'll fly with thee to the end of the earth. Wed Lanza!
Wed any man! He must fight well that wins thee,
Boy though I be, my Julia! Haste thee, sweet,
Each moment's worth an age. Away! Away!
JUL. Heaven speed our steps!
THEO. Away! [*Exeunt.*

THE

MASQUE OF THE SEASONS,

FROM

FIESCO AND DORIA, AN UNFINISHED TRAGEDY.

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY.

Giacomo.
Isabella.
Doria.
Fiesco.
Ladies and Gentlemen.

CHARACTERS OF THE MASQUE.

Spring.
Summer.
Autumn.
Winter.

SCENE—A Hall in the Fiesco Palace in Genoa.

THE

MASQUE OF THE SEASONS.

Gia. Where is Fiesco now?
Is. Oh, you should see him!
Celia is showing him her gay saloon
Sparkling with lamps and flowers, and her quaint masque
Of country lasses, cunningly prankt out
With rustic finery. The little thief
Hath stolen all my roses—all save this—
To deck the pretty damsel she calls Spring;
And there is she turning them round and round
To be admired; and there are they, all blushes,
Curtseying with coy and shamefaced bashfulness,
Yet full of a strange joy; and there is he
Dropping kind words and kinder smiles about,
Delighting and delighted: We must join them.

THE MASQUE.

Enter Spring.

Spring. Room for the jocund queen of new-born flowers!
Bathed in light fragrant airs and sunny showers
I come. Beneath my steps the grass is set

With violets, cowslips, daffodils, all wet
With freshest dew as any crystal clear.
The youth, the smile, the music of the year
Am I. Who loves not Spring? Gay songs of birds
Tell my delights, and rough, uncouthest words
Of shepherds. Fairest ladies here are posies
Of crisp curled hyacinths, pale maiden roses,
And bright anemonies of richer dyes
Than rubies, amethysts, or azure eyes
Of sapphires. Summer! hasten, leafy queen!
And Autumn help to bind my garlands sheen!

Enter SUMMER.

SUM. In a green nook, whose mossy bed receives
Shade from my own unnumbered world of leaves,
I heard a voice call Summer.
SPRING. Hast thou not
Brought flowery tribute? To thy favourite grot
I send my deftest, trustiest messenger,
A dappled butterfly, whose pinions whir
Like thy mailed beetle's. He was charged to say
That great Doria would be here to-day—
Did not that rouse thee?
SUM. Yes; his name hath won
To my deep solitudes, where scarce the sun
Can pierce the heavy umbrage. The cool places
To which the sweltering noon the wild deer chases;
The sheltered pools, which oft the swallow's winglet
Skims, or where lazily her darker ringlet
Some Naiad floating in her beauty laves;
The little bubbling springs, whose tiny waves
Do murmur gently round old pollard trees,
Mingling their music with the stir of bees;
All these are mine; mine the wild forest glade
Where the bright sun comes flickering through the shade,
Gilding the turfy wood-walks; and his name
Is wafted through them with an odorous fame,
Balm-breathing. Take my tribute. Strawberries bred

In shrubby dingles; cherries round and red,
And flowers that love the sun.

SPRING. Sweet flowers are thine,
Carnation, pink, acacia, jessamine,
With coral-budded myrtle, which discloses
White pearly blossoms and perfumed musk-roses.

Enter AUTUMN.

AU. Fair queens of leaves and flowers, give way to me,
To Autumn and his fruits. Do you not see
How I am laden? Corn and grapes are here,
And olives. Of the riches of the year
I am the joyful gatherer. Merry nights
Have I at harvest time, and rare delights
When the brown vintagers beneath the trees
Dance, and drink in the sunset and the breeze.
And I have brought young tendrils of the vine
Amidst your gayer garlands to entwine
For great Doria.

Enter WINTER.

SPRING. Ah! what form is this?
Stern Winter hence! Come not to mar our bliss
With frosts and tempests. Icy season hence!
See, Summer sickens at thy influence,
And I can feel my coronet withering.

WIN. Hence then thyself, fair, dainty, delicate thing!
Light fluttering playmate of the infant loves,
Mistress of butterflies and turtle-doves,
Hence! and bear with thee that gay blooming toy,
To a fair girl from an enamoured boy
Fit homage, not for heroes. In this form
Thou hail'st a friend, Doria! The wild storm
The raging of the elements, the wave
That Winter flings aloft, are to the brave
A victory and a glory. Thou hast breasted

My billows, mountain-high and foamy crested,
And vanquished them. And I can guerdon thee,
I, barren Winter, from the unfading tree
To valour consecrate. This laurel crown
Wear! as it clips thy temples, thy renown
Will cast upon its shining leaves a light
Ineffable. Approach, ye Seasons bright,
With gifts and garlands; let us offer here
The blended homage of the circling year.

THE END.

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MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

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